

Metropolis Conference: Crossroads of Change

Crossroads of Change: Working toward Transformative
Education for Adult Newcomers

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Dr. Karen Magro

Dr. Parvin Ghorayshi

University of Winnipeg



Context and Background

- New age of migration from civil conflict, political violence, and extreme poverty, and disease.
- Migration is recognized as one of the defining global issues of the twenty-first century.
- There are about 194 million people living outside their place of birth.
- Canada is in the forefront of this trend and is the destination for a growing number of international migrants, both forced and voluntary.



Context

- There is competition within Canada and between Western countries to attract immigrants in order to respond to their demographic and economic needs.
- Manitoba is in this competition and has been one of the top ten immigration receiving provinces in Canada
- Manitoba relies on immigration for its economic growth.
- During the last decade, over 60,000 new immigrants settled in Manitoba



The Changing Landscape of Immigration

- The face of North American cities continues to change and reflect the diversity of the world. For example, in Winnipeg, more than 100 languages are spoken across the province. Over 27% of immigrants speak Tagalog; after that, German, Punjabi, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Korean, Amharic, Ukrainian, and a number of other languages are spoken.



Background: Micro and Macro Factors Influencing Adult Learning

Adult learners' inner being and ways of understanding are influenced by:

- Political forces and conditions
- Environmental and geographic forces
- Workplace, educational settings, and daily life
- Physical and mental health
- Prior experience, age, personality, role and status in society(King, 2005: Bringing Transformative Learning to Life)



Background: Factors Influencing Acculturation

- The age when the individual settles in a new country
- Gender, culture, and social standing
- Previous education and professional/technical qualifications
- Early childhood experience
- Knowledge of official languages of the destination country
- Financial resources
- Family stability
- Experience of trauma if coming from war affected country
- Personality factors such as hardiness, openness to new experience, and resilience
- Mental and physical health
- Community based factors such as good housing, medical resources, educational services, and mentoring/counselling access.



The Changing Landscape of Immigration

- Around 75% of newcomers were in the economic class--skilled workers, business people, provincial nominees, caregivers, and their dependents.
- About 1,200 refugee per year, arrive to Manitoba (over half are sponsored privately)
- Employees are addressing their needs by recruiting temporary foreign workers. The number of temporary foreign workers more than doubled; from 1,426 in 2003 to 2,878 in 2007.
- The Manitoba Government aims to increase the number of immigrants to 20,000 per year, by 2016. (Ghorayshi, 2009)



Culture and immigration: Learning from our lives

- “Culture affects the process of education. Most histories reflect intercultural dimensions....Today the intercultural dynamic is related more to migration and refugees. Many adults have to adapt to a culture they were not prepared to face....Adults have to learn a new language, understand new rules, and adapt to a new set of cultural values.” (Pierre Dominice, 2000, p. 31)



Source Areas of Manitoba Immigration is Changing

- Asia, Australasia, and the Pacific
- Europe (except UK)
- Africa and the Middle East
- Latin America
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Source:MB Immigration Facts 2007
Statistical Report



Local Concerns: Conditions in Winnipeg's Inner City

- “Although cities are frequently viewed as sites of innovation and engines of economic change, they are simultaneously the sites of increasingly concentrated poverty and related problems. In Winnipeg's inner city, the household poverty rate was 44% in 2000---almost double the city wide rate.” (Dr. John Loxley, 2008, University of Manitoba)



Possibilities for Transformative Change

- Justice, Safety, and Security
- Neighborhood revitalization and housing
- Education, skill, and capacity building
- Community economic development
- Personal and Social Empowerment
- Local and National Initiatives to Foster Positive Change (Loxley, Silver, 2009)



Local Concerns

- “I see teens today who are alienated from their parents. They are living in two worlds. Poverty can drive young people from refugee backgrounds to a life of crime. I tried to help one teen who was working at a gas station. He was lured by drug dealers to quit his job and start working as a dealer. The African Mafia and Mad Cowz gang stem, in part, from family problems, and society negates the source of problems that some refugees have---worlds and cultures collide and the results can be devastating.” (Magro, 2009)



Indicators of Successful Resettlement

- Emotional and psychological wellness
- Positive-self concept and optimism
- Satisfying interpersonal relationships
- Educational and work related success and opportunities for advancement
- Satisfaction from hobbies
- Feeling in control; feeling of acceptance and appreciation in new culture
- Ability to handle daily activity
- Ability to build cultural and social networks
- Safe neighborhoods and good housing



Purpose of the Study

- What challenges most impact the successful adaptation of adult newcomers to Winnipeg?
- How do newcomers conceptualize successful adaptation?
- How do formal and informal contexts of learning and education impact acculturation processes?
- How have educational institutions (in particular, adult education) tried to meet the challenges of newcomers?
- What innovative programs have been developed to help newcomers “advance”—personally, socially, and economically?



Participants and Methodology

- This study is based on the voluntary participation of 118 adult refugees and immigrant learners, settlement service providers, adult educators, and administrators who work either in school divisions or community agencies.
- We used both primary and secondary data
- The concept of “triangulation” best defines our approach (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam and Associates, 2004).
- Narratives Inquiry
- Statistical Data
- Biographical Data



Theoretical Framework: Transformative Learning Theory

“Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep structural shift the basic premises of thought, feeling, and action. It is a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations, our relations with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender....our visions of alternative approaches to living, and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.” (Edmund O’Sullivan, 2002, p.11)



Theoretical Framework: Transformative Learning Theory

- Transformative Learning theory has been used as an interpretive framework to explain:
 - Individual Change
 - Community Change
 - Social and Global Movements (Gender Equity, Environmental Movements, Peace Education, etc.)



Transformative Learning

“Contemporary education suffers deeply by its eclipse of the spiritual dimension of our world and universe...in a world economy governed by profit motive, there is no place for the cultivation of the spiritual life....We must consider education as a spiritual venture.” (E. O’Sullivan, 2002, OISE/UT)



Expanding the role of education

- “Educational institutions at all levels must play a pivotal role in fostering a community’s sense of place. This is accomplished by having, as part of the curriculum, studies of the ‘bioregion.’ Bioregional study would encompass a study of the land, the history of the community that has occupied a region, and the histories of the people in a bioregion.” (O’Sullivan, 2002).



Theoretical Framework: Transformative Learning Theory

- Transformative Learning Theory was used as an interpretive framework to provide insight into:
- Learning processes of acculturation and integration
(e.g. Disorienting dilemmas and losses, occupational repositioning, navigating an unfamiliar culture, learning a new language, trying out new roles, building intercultural competence)



Transformative Learning Theory : Applications

- The role and responsibility of adult educators and service providers who work with immigrants and refugees
- The approaches to curriculum design and the teaching/learning strategies use to encourage learning and literacy development
- The role of various settlement agencies in Winnipeg
- The specific ways that newcomers become “agents of change” in an unfamiliar culture
- Implications of transformative learning to individual and community change



Transformative Learning: Personal Change

Ten stages (J. Mezirow, 1981; 2000)

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations
4. Relating one's discontent of similar experiences to others
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. Planning a course of action
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans.
9. Provisional efforts to try new roles
10. A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by new perspectives



Transformative Learning: Applications to Personal Change

Collectively the work of Jack Mezirow, Patricia Cranton, Edward Taylor, and Steven Brookfield emphasize key factors impacting learning:

- Opportunities and barriers
- Personality traits
- Cultural and educational background
- Readiness of the learner
- Philosophy and mission of institution
- Context
- Resources



Findings: Multiple Barriers Still Exist

- Poverty
- Housing in safe and welcoming neighborhoods
- Loss of culture and traditional family supports
- Literacy and language barriers
- Cultural misunderstanding
- Inadequate resources in the community (e.g. educational resources, access to day care)
- Racism and discrimination
- Intergenerational conflicts
- Multiple barriers faced by women
- Individuals with special needs and learning disabilities
- Mental Health concerns
- Underemployment and Unemployment
- Information Barriers that interfere with access to education, health, and employment



Housing and Mental Health: Where you live makes a difference

- Problems with overcrowding: Individuals cycle through homes where they do not feel safe; people live in fear and anxiety
- Women are more vulnerable to violence: physical, sexual, and emotional
- Women refugees experience higher rates of depression and are more likely to feeling isolated
- Cultural sensitivity: teachers, service providers, etc. need to be more culturally sensitive
- Immigrants and refugees face other issues in society related to experiences of racism and discrimination
- Intercultural conflicts



Barriers Still Exist: Underemployment

- “What are employers looking for? In my opinion, they are looking for employees with ‘Canadian values, culture, and rituals. While regulatory bodies, employers, and others may wish to close off options to immigrants, those armed with a knowledge of the dominant class’s rituals, habits, and practices are more likely to attain economic equality. [Skilled worker class] immigrants are assessed against a grid that awards points on the basis of work experience, level of education, official language proficiency, age, and adaptability...the selection criteria will not necessarily translate into professional placements in their fields.” (C. Khan, 2006: The closed door to immigrant professionals in Canada)



Coping Strategies

- Educational institutions as a safe haven
- Social networks; Friends and Family
- Adult Learning Centres and Access to Counselling, Mentoring, and Employment Links
- Personality Factors such as optimism, resilience, and faith
- More advocacy and supports are needed
- Quality of life supports: Affordable and better housing; civic engagement; community safety; educational and employment opportunities; awareness of problems by agencies and a willingness to change....



Resilience

- Resilience can be described as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.

Psychological resilience is concerned with behavioral adaptation, usually defined in terms of internal states of well being and effective functioning.” (Anika Anderson, 2004)



Expanding Conceptions of Intelligence

- Many newcomers have multiple strengths and assets
- Practical problem-solving abilities
- Tacit knowledge
- Decisional skill and flexibility
- Wisdom
- Resilience
- Contextual Intelligence



Expanding Conceptions of Intelligence

- Robert Sternberg (2004) describes intelligence as a form of “mental self-management” and an ability to adapt to new environments and shape them.
- “While the components of intelligence are universal, their use in shaping environmentally appropriate behavior varies not only across groups but across individuals as well.”
- Analytical, Creative, and Practical Intelligence are balanced with emotional and social intelligence



Building an Asset Model: Intercultural Competence

- The multi-cultural person is:
“One who has achieved an advanced level in the process of becoming intercultural and whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited but open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of any one culture. The intercultural person possesses an ability to accept and appreciate the differences that lie between people of different culture” (Bennett, 2007)



Intercultural Competence: An essential skill for global citizenship

- Intercultural competence is “a transformative process” whereby the individual develops an adaptive capacity to understand, appreciate, and accommodate to new cultural demands.
- Intercultural competence is a personal and social skill. However, it should not be viewed as a one way process of newcomers “fitting” into Canadian society.



Working toward transformative education: Promising Practices

- Improve Cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - Cultural diversity in curriculum development
 - Representation
 - Improved Coordination and collaboration between educational and employment sectors
 - A holistic approach to education that assesses individual needs (e.g. the Met School; Pathways to Education)
 - academic support
 - social support
 - mentoring (individual, family, workplace, career)
 - financial support
- *Assess Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: Are newcomer skills, prior education, and experience recognized?



Working toward a transformative education

- Critically evaluate curriculum choices at primary and secondary levels----do they reflect inclusion and diversity?(George Sefa Dei, 2010)
- Assess hiring policies---to what extent does the teaching faculty reflect the diversity of the student body?
- Examine mentoring programs for foreign trained teachers---are they working?
- Reduce pre-arrival barriers---what information is given to prospective immigrants about Manitoba and employment opportunities? How accurate is this information?
- Mentoring programs over longer periods of time may be needed to help newcomer professions find work in their chosen career.
- Examine links between Adult Learning Centres, Post Secondary Institutions, and the Employment Sectors (Greater Collaboration is needed)
- How welcoming are our communities to newcomers?



Creative Approaches to Adult Literacy Education

- Interdisciplinary Approaches
- Grounding the curriculum in the needs, aspirations, and goals of the learners
- Integrating civic, health, and cultural awareness into literacy resources
- Life History Writing
- Emphasize multiple dimensions of literacy
- Multi-genre approaches (New London Group)
- Teaching social justice issues through literature
- Art, Drama, Music, and Dance as ways to create a holistic literacy curriculum
- Encouraging intercultural and emotional intelligence in literacy



Working toward Transformative Education

- Consider our own role as educators
- Our sense of self and identity
- Curriculum choices that reflect choice and voice
- Teaching and Learning Strategies that address multiple learning styles
- Climate and mission of the educational institution
- Resources
- Fostering a climate of inclusion through appropriate representation of teachers that reflect the cultural diversity of students
- Changes are slow in coming: Islands of Transformation



Wisdom as an Neglected Quality of Giftedness

- “The question we must ask ourselves is whether the skills that are rewarded in schools are those that matter later in life....Academic skills are a beginning and not an end, notes intelligence theorist Robert Sternberg(2004), and with a world in turmoil, we need to turn our attention to the development of giftedness in wisdom....Reasoning ability, altruism, intuition, creativity, learning from ideas and one’s environment, good judgment, and creativity are all components of wisdom.”



Five Minds for the Future (Howard Gardner, 2007)

- The disciplinary mind-mastery of major schools of thought (including science, mathematics, and history) and at least one professional craft
- The synthesizing mind-ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines.
- The creating mind-capacity to uncover and clarify new problems and questions
- The ethical mind-fulfillment of one's responsibilities as a worker and citizen
- The respectful mind- welcomes differences between human individuals and groups.



Working toward transformative solutions

- Teaching empathy:
“Literature and philosophy could help teach empathy across cultures and promote critical thinking about the hollow promises of technology, fortune, and fame. But that would take a true leap of faith--- and reason—in a plugged-in, celebrity minded age.” (John Allemang, Globe and Mail, September 4, 2010).



Beyond Resettlement: Possibilities for Transformative Education

- Experiential and authentic learning encourages adults to apply knowledge in practical ways
- Teachers and counsellors could attend more specialized workshops that provide information about the socio-political, cultural, and educational background of EAL adult learners
- Encourage activities that foster dialogue, problem solving, and critical thinking
- Develop courses and programs that foster connection, inclusion, and meaning
- Integrate emotional and social intelligence: Empathy, Motivation, Mood Management, the Art of Building Relationships, Intercultural Competence
- Increase opportunities for apprenticeship and mentoring programs in the trades and professions
- Encourage citizenship, peace, and global education
- Encourage formal and informal learning opportunities

