Volume 27 Issue 3

cjsae
the canadian journal for the study of adult education

la revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes
rcééa

Distributed Pedagogy of Difference: Reimagining Immigrant Training and Education

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The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education/
La revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes
Editor-in-Chief: Donovan Plumb
www.cjsae-rceea.ca

27,3 June/jun 2015, 1–16
ISSN1925-993X (online)

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L'Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes
www.casae-aceea.ca

DISTRIBUTED PEDAGOGY OF DIFFERENCE: REIMAGINING IMMIGRANT TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

Training and education are instrumental in integrating immigrants to the host labour market in Canada. Without much pedagogical deliberation, however, related programs are easily positioned to narrow immigrants' socio-cultural differences from mainstream society. As a result, not only do they reinforce immigrants as the deficit others, they also miss an important opportunity to learn from the vast knowledge and experiences that immigrants bring to the country. This paper problematizes the deficit approach toward difference. Through bringing together pedagogies of difference and the practice-based ontology of learning, it advances a distributed pedagogy of difference. The major proposals include: 1) turning differences into strength-based curriculum; 2) engaging differences to advance knowledge and practices; and 3) experimenting with socio-cultural and socio-material power and order. Central to these proposals is to turn differences into a space of learning and teaching for all and a point of expansion for social practices.

Résumé

La formation et l'éducation jouent un rôle clé dans l'intégration des immigrants dans le marché du travail canadien. Cependant, sans beaucoup de réflexions pédagogiques, les programmes concernés offrent souvent une perception limitée des différences socioculturelles des immigrants par rapport à la société dominante. Par conséquent, la vision des immigrants comme l'Autre déficitaire étant renforcée, on rate une occasion importante pour s'inspirer des connaissances et des expériences très riches des immigrants. Cet article problématise l'approche de déficit pour aborder la différence. En combinant les pédagogies de différence et l'ontologie de l'apprentissage basée sur la pratique, l'article propose une pédagogie répartie de différence. Les propositions principales comportent: 1) transformer les différences en programme scolaire basé sur les points forts; 2) mobiliser les différences pour développer les connaissances et les pratiques; et 3) faire des expériences avec le pouvoir et l'ordre socioculturels et socio-matériels. Ce qui est au cœur de ces propositions, c'est de

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transformer les différences en un espace d'apprentissage et d'enseignement pour tout le monde et en un point de développement pour les pratiques sociales.

Immigrant Training and Education

Up until the 1960s, Canadian immigration policies were overtly biased against people of colour, preferring instead Anglo-Saxon and European descendants. However, to gain a competitive edge in the global economy, Canada has since resorted to a series of point systems to attract immigrants with educational and work experiences demanded in the country. Given the policy shift, immigrants in Canada today are much more diverse in their social and cultural backgrounds, with the majority of them coming from non-European countries such as China, India, and the Philippines. Due to their socio-cultural differences, immigrants, despite their higher-than-average educational backgrounds, are often under- and unemployed (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008). Cultural habitus that distinguishes immigrants from White norms have hindered their employment opportunities (Bauder, 2005). Immigrants' educational and work experiences, especially those acquired from non-traditional immigrant source countries, are by default devalued (Guo, 2009). The lack of recognition of foreign qualifications has resulted in economic loss for Canada in the billions (Reitz, 2001).

To enhance their labour market outcomes, immigrants have actively invested in training and education to acquire Canadian degrees, diplomas, and certificates (e.g., Adamuti-Trache, Anisef, Sweet, & Walters, 2013; Ng, & Shan, 2010). Meanwhile, to integrate immigrants into the host labour market, since 1974 the Canadian government has provided newcomers with integration and settlement services, including information, employment, and language training, mainly through the delivery of community-based organizations (Shan, 2015). As the government better recognizes the economic cost associated with the devaluation of immigrants' qualifications, government funding for immigrant services has tripled since 2006 (Government of Canada, 2014). As a result, the last 10 years or so have witnessed the emergence of many new programs and services, including training programs that are geared toward bridging immigrants to their fields of practice. These bridging programs typically engage a broader range of stakeholders; in addition to community-based organizations, some of the programs also involve educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, industries, and employers (e.g., Friesen, 2011; Van Kleef & Werquin, 2013). That is to say, the demography of the participants in formal and non-formal training and educational programs is bound to change, which necessitates a close examination of the curriculum and pedagogies used today across sites of training and education.

While training and education have played important roles in immigrants' continuation of their career lives in Canada, strangely, there has been little pedagogical discussion as to how immigrants should be engaged in learning and training. Related studies are generally critical of immigrant training programs. For instance, in a well-known study, Mojab (1998) grappled with the role of immigrant training in relation to the political economy of Canada as a post-industrial society in which deskilling takes place simultaneously with (re)skilling, despite the rhetoric that Canada is a skill-based economy. Based on her examination of professional immigrant women's experiences, Mojab argued that the demand for low-skilled labour, coupled with sexism, racism, and a lack of recognition of the women's prior

experiences, has relegated many immigrant women to the bottom of the labour market. Moving from the political economy of training to the organization of training programs, Slade (2012) provided a critique of the bridging program she studied in Ontario, which uses a high-school curriculum to prepare highly skilled immigrants for employment. In a study of the curriculum orientation of Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), Cervatiuc and Ricento (2012) found that trainers may conveniently take a prescriptive approach to teaching Canadian culture to newcomers, rendering irrelevant immigrants' own cultures, epistemological views, and life experiences. Successful programs have been reported; these programs are commended for extending immigrants' social and cultural capital recognized in Canada (see Friesen, 2011; Van Kleef & Werquin, 2013).

Given that immigrants have become major participants in training and educational programs, the limited pedagogical discussion in relation to this demographic group is problematic. It is probably because of this lack of attention that existing curriculums and pedagogies have been readily extended to train immigrants. This same reason is probably why we content ourselves with helping immigrants expand their social and cultural capitals. In both cases, unfortunately, socio-cultural differences are easily associated with deficiency that needs to be redressed through training. We miss an important opportunity to learn from immigrants, many of whom are skilled workers and experienced professionals. Given this context, in this paper I engage in some pedagogical imagination of how immigrants might be engaged differently in training and education. This conceptual project problematizes the deficit/dismissive approach toward differences. It instead aims to turn differences into points of dialogue and exchange, as well as expansion for social and cultural practices. To this end, I endeavour to bring together the body of scholarship on pedagogies of difference and the practice-based ontologies of learning. Before getting into my pedagogical discussion, I first look to the changing context of globalization and immigration at large, which provides not only the context but also conceptual anchorage for my pedagogical project.

Globalization and Immigration

My pedagogical imagination starts with an attempt to understand the nature of globalization, the impacts of mass immigration, and the changing flows of power, control, and order in the globalized world. Globalization has been understood as the compression of space and time (Harvey, 1990) and "the intensification of worldwide social relations and interactions such that distant events acquire very localized impacts and vice versa" (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 2). While it is a truism that globalization is here, consensus has not been reached on the nature or significance of it, given the diverse ontological (descriptive), epistemological (explanatory), and ethical orientations (definition of ideal human conditions) associated with its explication (Held & McGrew). Many scholars would agree, however, that as a result of globalization, encounters of differences have become more frequent, which may challenge as well as entrench the hegemonic power and culture of the West.

Driven by Capitalist Expansion

From the perspective of Marxist political economy, the contemporary era of globalization could be attributed to the crisis-prone property of capitalism (Harvey, 1990) and signifies the "flux of internal relations within capitalism as a whole" (p. 342). In the 1960s and '70s, Western capitalist countries faced economic stagnation with saturated internal markets.

To salvage themselves from the economic recession, they started transitioning from the rigid Fordist regime to a flexible regime of accumulation through economic globalization. Within this overarching picture, capitalist interest in accumulation continues to dominate, bringing more and more countries into the world system, where Western states command central power and control. There is of course no shortage of resistances by those on the periphery vis-à-vis the hegemonic power of the West. Yet expressions of otherness and localized resistances are often "subject to the power of capital over the co-ordination of universal fragmented space and the march of capitalism's global historical time" (Harvey, p. 239).

Drawing on Habermas, Donovan Plumb (1999) suggested that while economic globalization has a sweeping effect of alienation on social life, we can strive for alternatives through enhanced communicative actions. Specifically, he juxtaposed Harvey's (1990) accumulation-based space with the communication-based lifeworld. While the former is dominated by the productive system, the latter is meshed with customs, norms, traditions, and shared practices of people in particular places. Plumb pointed out that the system's needs for reproductive forces and resources provide the link for the two spaces to exist in mutually independent and yet contradictory ways. While the system-induced space keeps on encroaching on the space of the lifeworld, it also relies on the latter and is thereby constrained by it. To illustrate this relationship, he showed that with the ascendance of capitalist modernity, modernist ideologies such as cultural hierarchy, objective rationality, linearity of development, democracy, and universalism of truth have also dominated the ways in which the lifeworld is perceived and managed. Given the totalizing effect of the capitalist system, the lifeworld has been pressured to take up all-encompassing policies to establish homogeneous frameworks that coordinate social practices at the cost of social differences. On the other hand, Plumb also suggested that we can retain power in the lifeworld by developing an increased capacity to communicate differences among individuals and sub-groups.

Cultural Plurality and the Diaspora Space

While the narrative of accumulation has been a major way to grapple with the sea changes that the world has been experiencing since the 1970s, others do not see the logic of the capitalist mode of production as sufficient to explain globalization as a human condition. Roland Robertson (1992), from a cultural perspective, has argued that globalization cannot be simply understood as a linear outcome of the "Western 'project' of modernity" (p. 27). He believes that while the condition of modernity may have brought about the compression of space and time, globalization may have thrown into disorder the very order of modernity. In other words, "the global spread of modernity . . . undermines its very conditions of existence as diverse others are brought into relation with each other through a variety of means" (Edwards & Usher, 2008, p. 26). Among all the forces that may have contributed to the destabilization of the Western-centric order, migration might be a direct one.

The scale of migration today is unparalleled (Castles & Miller, 2009). In 2013, the global migrant population was estimated at 232 million, which constituted 3.2% of the world population, up from 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990. About a third of immigrants were born in the South and are living in the North, and another third were born and are living in the South (United Nations Population Division, 2013). What distinguishes

the current migration flow is that, given the global war for talent (Brown & Tannock, 2009), more states have introduced preferential policies for skilled immigrants (International Organization of Migration, 2013). Consequently, skilled and professional people have gained unprecedented mobility across national borders. In this context, to borrow from Chambers (1993), it could be said that "the 'Third World' is no longer maintained at a distance 'out there' but begins to appear 'in here,'" and "the encounter between diverse cultures, histories, religions and languages no longer occurs along the peripheries . . . but emerges at the centre of our daily lives, in the cities and cultures of the so-called 'advanced' or 'First' world" (p. 2). These daily interactions mean that "cultural pluralism" has become a constitutive feature of the contemporary era of globalization (Robertson, 1992, p. 61).

Traditionally, it has been projected that over time immigrants would integrate and transform from "the other" to "us." Recently, scholars have increasingly come to see that differences between immigrants and the host society may never completely disappear. Immigrants, when adapting to a host culture, necessarily add an "accent" to it (Kramer, 2008). As a result, Brah (1996), in her conception of a diaspora space, argued that today, "the native is as much the diasporian as the diasporian is the native" (p. 209). While this very claim risks overgeneralization and verges on romanticism, what Edwards and Usher (2007) suggest below should be identifiable to many: "We would suggest it is rather that the familiar and unfamiliar are reconfigured and reordered and that increased (en)counters with strangeness—direct and indirect—can result in enhanced understanding and sociality as much as increased alienation and/or hostility" (p. 40).

In the context of cultural plurality and the meetings of the familiar and the unfamiliar, it is perhaps high time for us to imagine "significant interruptions" (Chambers, 1993, p. 2) of the existing social order that privileges the superior position of Western culture and practices.

Changing Flows of Power, Control, and Order

If indeed capitalist interest of accumulation has configured the interrelations of the West and the rest, the specific ways in which domination and resistance are produced and encounters are choreographed are more intricate today than in the past. In this respect, it is useful to turn to postmodernist conceptions of power. Foucault challenged the tradition notion of power as a "sovereign" and "episodic" exercise of coercion by (the feudal) states; alternatively, he saw power as "diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitute agents rather than being deployed by them" (Gaventa, 2003, p. 1). Much of his work focused on the disciplinary power of modern institutions through the circulation of knowledge and norms. He argued that power operates through our acceptance, as embodied beings, of forms of knowledge and truth, whereas truth or, rather, regimes of truth are often propagated as scientific and institutionalized discourses. Of note, while Foucault's work is well-known for helping us understand our subjection (and our complicity in our own subjection) to discourses, he also saw discourses as "a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1990, p. 101). In the context of globalization, various discourses have an increased opportunity to meet. These discourses may collide, collude, or compete with one another. They may as well contest, complement, or complete one another.

In any case, their coming together provides a space for knowledge expansion as well as opportunities for cultural criticism.

While Foucault highlighted the regulatory power of discourses working through and upon bodies, Deleuze focused on the moment-to-moment production of power. In *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, Deleuze (1992/2010) suggested that just as Foucault's enclosed space of discipline replaced earlier societies of sovereignty, since the mid-twentieth century, the capitalist West has been refashioned into societies of control. If enclosed spaces are moulds, casting distinct subjects, controls are modulations that constitute an endless effort of tuning and changing. If in enclosed spaces discourses and human bodies are the conduits of power, in societies of control it is the assemblages of the discursive and non-discursive and the assemblages of bodies/matter that constitute the social and material spaces in which we dwell. The term "assemblage" is coined to understand social entities as "wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between the parts" (De Landa, in Tamboukou, 2009, p. 9). They are "characterized by relations of externality . . . (which) imply that a component part of the assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different" (Tamboukou, p. 10).

It must be questioned whether we could see the world as a constellation of assemblages, or to what extent we could understand assemblage in relation to the external functionality of its components, without attending to the "sovereign subjects" (Spivak, 1988, p. 271) who author the self and attribute meanings from a particular social historical and economic location. The decentring of subjects or the construction of subjects as merely effects of discourses (and assemblages) may have, in fact inaugurated a subject, the subject of the Western intellectuals, who have the power to name and map discourses and assemblages, rendering impotent the subalterns or the economically dispossessed to utter differences (Spivak). Yet the notion of assemblage brings to life the images of movement, flow, networks, displacement, and emergence that are becoming increasingly pronounced in the context of globalization. The coming together of the material and the discursive, the human and non-human—especially those from formerly unconnected places, spaces, and time—may provide new grounds, new materials, and alternative conditioning for the formation of subjects (cf., Edwards & Clarke, 2002, p. 164). In other words, in the context of globalization and immigration, encounters of difference may both highlight tensions between worlds and present opportunities for transformation.

Pedagogies of Difference

My pedagogical imagination takes into account the hegemonic and alienating impacts of economic globalization. I recognize that immigrant training and education take place in a context of capitalist accumulation at an accelerated speed. However, I also believe that the socio-cultural and socio-material differences brought together through globalization may afford opportunity to develop sociality and give rise to new knowledge and practice. The question, then, is how should trainers and educators engage socio-cultural and socio-material differences? With this question, I first turn to the scholarship of pedagogies of difference.

In the past few decades, the notion of socio-cultural difference has provided the conceptual ground for educators of different ideological traditions, although there is no consensus on which axis of social difference constitutes the primary concern (Trifonas,

2003). Marxist scholars, for instance, see class difference as the root problem for educational equity. Among others, Peter McLaren (1997) criticized the traditional assimilative approach in immigrant education and suggested that multicultural education needs to be expanded to address the effects of economic globalization. Together with Kris Gutierrez (1997), he argued that inequalities in the school system are as much a part of moral indifference as they are a result of the current economic flaws within late capitalism. Meanwhile, feminists have consistently brought attention to the socially constructed nature of gender differences in their fight against patriarchy (e.g., Tisdell, 1998). Critical race theorists have also alerted us to the importance of respecting but not essentializing racial differences (e.g., Hall, 1997). Other social groups have also strived to make group differences more visible while contesting the construction of normative subjects as a mirror image of the White (Trifonas). Fraser's work (1997, 2000) perhaps best summarized this social and intellectual movement. Specifically, Fraser identified two ideological orientations of the field: one focuses on egalitarian socio-economic redistribution, which is interested mostly in political economic restructuring and social transformation, and the other the cultural politics of recognition in which status groups strive for the recognition of their perspectives and knowledges. In either case, scholars strive to place voices from the margins at the centre of inquiry (Edwards & Fowler, 2007; Yosso, 2006). Fraser proceeded to suggest a "perspectival dualist" analysis; i.e., we should take up social and economic redistribution and cultural recognition as two mutually irreducible dimensions of justice (Fraser, 1997, 2000).

The intellectual attention to social differences is accompanied by the rise of a range of pedagogies of difference (Trifonas, 2003). Some of them focus on changing teaching practices. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), for instance, proposes that teaching is only effective when teachers make teaching relevant to the lived experiences and frames of reference of students. To this end, teachers should develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity, demonstrate caring in building learning communities, communicate with students of diverse backgrounds, and use differentiated modes of instructions. Gale and Desmore (2000) are interested, in particular, in what it means for a teacher to act justly in the classroom. They embrace a notion of recognitive justice that is concerned specifically with what it means to validate group differences. They argued that a recognitive approach involves three conditions for social justice: fostering respect for different social groups through their self-identification, opportunities for self-development and self-expression, and participation of groups in decision-making processes. Other critical educators suggest the need to fundamentally transform the relationship between teachers and (adult) students; the pedagogy proposed by Freire, for instance, is about developing an ontological vocation, a theory of existence that views people as subjects, not objects (empty vessels) to be filled with information. As part of his revolutionary pedagogy, Freire advocated dialogue. Dialogue, Freire wrote, is "the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name [that is, to change] the world" (Freire, 1990, p. 76). This dialogue references an alternative relationality in which people share equal roles of teacher and learner in the pursuit of creative and liberatory knowledge (Freire, 1990).

It could be said that the above critical pedagogies "broadly seek . . . to explore how relations of power and inequality (social, cultural, economic), in their myriad forms of combinations, and complexities, are manifest and are challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults" (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009, p. 3). They put, rightly so, their faith in collective human agency and strive to liberate the silenced souls from the oppression of

the dominant group, which constitutes what Henry Giroux (1991) called the modernist project of emancipation. With the influence of postmodernism, Giroux endeavoured to redefine critical pedagogy into border pedagogy (Giroux, 1991, 2005). Giroux's border pedagogy retains the emancipatory project of the critical tradition, which he suggested could be renewed in a postmodern world in which "difference, contingency, and power can reassert, redefine, and in some instances collapse the monolithic boundaries of nationalism, sexism, racism and class oppression" (Giroux, 1991, p. 65). Border pedagogy is the practice of "people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 199). It involves, first, "forms of transgression in which existing borders forged in domination can be challenged and redefined" (Giroux, 1991, p. 51). Second, it necessitates the creation of space in which "students become border crossers in order to understand otherness within its own terms, and to further create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power" (p. 52). Third, border pedagogy "serves to make visible the historically and socially constructed strengths and limitations of those places and borders we inherit and which frame our discourses and social relations" (p. 53). Border pedagogy is a critical and yet open process through which all involved come to "recognize and analyze how the differences within and between various groups can expand the potential of human life and democratic possibilities" (Giroux, 2005, p. 26).

Of note, pedagogies of difference are often framed within ethical, democratic, and social justice frameworks. They are typically considered as posing competing discourses against the instrumentalist and bureaucratic pursuit of excellence, efficiency, and accountability. The pedagogical proposals often focus on reflection on the positionalities of teachers and students, representation of voices, and politics of consciousness across social difference. These are measures that are fuelled with radical determination and human internationality to reconstitute the existing social and power relations within which marginalization is produced. These radical proposals, I believe, should find their relevance in immigrant training and education. Meanwhile, while holding social justice as core, I also wish to stress that pedagogical practices should afford existing practices the opportunity to grow. That is, the goal to promote social justice does not have to come at the expense of an "instrumentalist" pursuit of excellence. Further, while emphasizing human reflectivity and agency, I also wish to sensitize researchers and educators to how non-human things may participate in the production of an equitable learning and teaching space. With this in mind, I turn to the practice-based ontology of learning.

Practice-based Ontology of Learning

Before moving to the practice-based ontology of learning, some notes on the notion of practice are in order. The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of what Schatzki (2001) called a "practice turn," a converging trend for scholars to focus on practices to challenge traditional dualisms such as those of the subject and the object, the individual and the social, and the human and the non-human. The constructs of practice, however, vary. What conjoins them is that they all, observed Schatzki, have paid attention to the "embodied, materially mediated array of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (p. 2). Practices are embodied in that they are constituted by and constituting bodies. They are materially mediated as human activities are inevitably

interwoven with "ordered constellations of nonhuman entities" (Schatzki, p. 2). Shared practical understanding does not mean that practices are homogeneous or harmonious; rather, it highlights collective consciousness—or, using Leont'ev's (1978) language, "co-knowledge" that is constitutive of practices.

Practice-based learning is an umbrella term for a range of approaches that see learning as a derivative effect of socio-cultural and socio-material practices. It is particularly useful for my pedagogical project, as it helps distribute the possibility and responsibility of learning within socio-cultural and socio-material practices. The socio-cultural perspectives, for instance, suggest that we learn by being a part of social activities mediated through cultural artifacts or cultural tools such as language, texts, and technology. Wertsch (1998), among others, suggested that a focus on mediated action can help with a socio-cultural analysis of the mind. Lave and Wenger see communities of practice as constitutive of what we learn, how we learn, and how our identities are formulated (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In the same vein, Billett (2006) advanced that workplaces are organized spaces of learning where social norms and practices regulate an individual's engagement with learning and work. Engeström's (1999) activity triangle or activity system theory is an analytical lens that directs a researcher's attention to the interrelations of subjects, objects, and mediators of learning and the rules, community, and division of labour, as well as to the higher-order processes of production, consumption, and distribution.

More recently, post-structural, postmodern, and post-human theories have also influenced the construction of practice and practice-based learning (e.g., Fenwick, Jensen, & Nerland, 2012; Hager, Lee, & Reich, 2012). For instance, drawing on the work of Foucault, Fejes and Nicoll (2012) have explored the governing power of discursive practice through the technology of the self. If Foucauldian perspectives have emphasized the regulatory power of discursive practices over subjects, scholars influenced by post-human theories have tried to decentre humans as the sole subjects within practices and, indeed, "denaturalize(d) learning as a solely human and mentalist phenomenon (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011, p. 117). Informed by actor network theory, Fenwick (2012) proposed that materiality should be foregrounded within practices; here materiality "includes tools, technologies, actions and objects, but not in ways that treat these as 'brute' or inherently separate and distinct from humans as users and designers. Materiality also includes texts and discourses, but not in ways that over-privilege linguistic, inter-textual and cultural circulations" (p. 69).

Whether human beings should or could be decentred from any construct of practices is subject to debate. Yet the socio-material perspectives toward learning help enhance our sensitivity toward the roles that non-human physical things play in the constitution of practices. They direct our attention to the in situ production of power and control and the contextualized interactional understandings that may give rise to opportunistic, innovative, and creative ways of learning and engagement (Johnsson & Boud, 2010). The most significant contribution of the post-human influence on conceptions of learning is an indication that learning is a phenomenon distributed among an array of human and non-human actors. In this regard, Hager, Lee, & Reich (2012) stated: "Theorizations of practice that attend to instances of practice as assemblages or orchestrations of embodied, material, technological and spatial-temporal phenomena brought together in concerted action construe learning as a distributed endeavour" (p. 7). This focus on learning as distributed practice radically opens our understanding of learning as a phenomenon interlinked with a multitude of

actors, things, communities, processes, and practices (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011) that may be made conspicuous and turned into a deliberate pedagogical space.

From the perspective of practice-based learning, learning is conceived as an interactive effect of participation, community, activity system, assemblage, and networks. It is through participating in social activities of various forms that individuals come to organize themselves to achieve agency, negotiate identities (Holland & Lachicotte, 1998), and develop ways of knowing, doing, and relating (Kemmis, 2012). Yet rather than holding individuals as the source of change, the practice ontology holds social, cultural, and material practices accountable for what people learn and how they learn. The importance of resorting to the practice ontology is that it opens possibility for change, which may come not only from individuals, but also from the changing assemblages, networks, communities, or ecologies of practices (e.g., Kemmis).

Distributed Pedagogy of Difference: Reimagining Immigrant Training and Education

In the context of immigration and globalization, the increasingly frequent encounter of differences has made it imperative for adult educators to rethink existing pedagogical practices and reimagine ways to make productive use of differences in teaching, learning, and working practices. To this end, I wish to revitalize pedagogies of difference, especially their emphasis on recognition, power equalization, building participatory capacity, and consciousness-raising. Meanwhile, I also advocate that differences should be taken as opportunities for us to develop a strength-based curriculum, advance practices, and experiment deliberately with socio-cultural and socio-material power and order.

Turning Differences into Strength-based Curriculum

While differences are manifested in varying ways, I am especially interested in boundary differences or "socio-cultural difference [that] lead . . . to discontinuity in action or interaction" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, pp. 132–133). By nature, a boundary brings together at least two sites of practices that are historically, spatially, and socially related. Boundary spaces are populated with people, as well as things and boundary objects, who come to form relatively durable or lasting activities and communities or ephemeral assemblages and networks. As a boundary, the space of difference is by definition ambiguous in that it divides and yet unites, it disconnects and reconnects, and it signifies both here and there and yet is neither here nor there (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). The metaphor of boundary is particularly helpful in that it highlights that differences are not merely manifestations of contradiction, but may become drivers of change, especially when they come into productive clashes.

Given the strategic position that socio-cultural differences occupy between cultures, places, and spaces, I am proposing a strength-based curriculum, which could be considered for both formal and informal training of (or with) immigrants. A strength-based curriculum is premised on the idea that differences should not be seen as barriers to, but resources for, learning. Critical pedagogies have long suggested that teaching/learning does not happen until it is made relevant to the lived experiences and linked to the cultural reference framework of students of diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1979; Gay, 2000). This process cannot be accomplished by those who teach for those who are supposed to be learning. It has to involve the participation of all stakeholders, particularly the "learners" who are expected to cross boundaries of practices (cf., Gale & Densmore, 2000). Incorporating other cultural

narratives into the curriculum, however, is not an end in itself. A critical engagement with the texts or cultural narratives also needs to take place, which involves open communication and interrogation of particular kinds of knowledge and practice. This type of engagement may serve as a (third) space that is generative of hybrid knowledge and practice (Bhabha, 1994; Giroux, 2005; Soja, 1996). A strength-based curriculum and critical engagement with texts redirect attention to the array of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities held by socially marginalized groups, which often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Yosso, 2006). By turning differences into strength-based curriculum, educators would go beyond an assimilative approach to education. Immigrants are positioned as active in the transfer, translation, and transformation of knowledge and practices across differences.

Engaging Differences to Advance Practice

Engagement of differences not only gives voice to different knowledge and practices, but may also directly contribute to the advancement of practices. To this end, it is important to make explicit how boundaries and boundary objects can afford a space of learning. Based on a review of related research, Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identified four learning mechanisms at the boundary space: identification, reflection, coordination, and transformation. Identification is in part about "othering," or defining in a dialogical manner a different practice in light of another. It is also about identifying the need for legitimate coexistence, which involves politics of personal identities and membership. I would also add that, rather than solely seeking for legitimate coexistence, identification of differences should be conducted as a means to establish human connections (instead of taking for granted the condition of alienation implicating workers, given the higher-order interest of capital accumulation). In the process of identification, reflection is encouraged. Reflection involves perspective making and perspective taking. Perspective making means making explicit one's understanding and knowledge on a particular issue or subject. Perspective taking refers to making sense of another thought world. These two aspects of reflection are believed to be dialogical, creative, and enriching in nature, with the potential to lead to new knowledge. This is an exercise not to produce relativized knowledge, but to encourage exchange as well as cultural criticism or critical understanding of our own cultures and practices.

Coordination is about the procedures useful to coordinate diverse practices even in the absence of consensus. It requires a communicative connection between diverse practices and perspectives. It may also involve boundary objects or artifacts acting as means of articulation among different practices. It requires an inter-subjective ground while allowing for different understandings and practices. It also involves routinization, although routinized practices are still subject to situated interpretation. This very process, I stress, may lead to the emergence of new assemblages and networks that redistribute ways of knowing, doing, and relating.

The final learning opportunity offered by the boundary space is called transformation. Transformation may as well start with an event of disruption and confrontation. It will need people to recognize the problem space. As people try to bridge the problem space, something hybrid may emerge that may take the shape of new tools and signs that need to be crystallized and revisited.

Experimenting with Socio-cultural and Socio-material Power and Order

If we seriously engage in differences as a productive and permeable space of change, it is impossible not to address issues of power and social order. In this regard, it is necessary for us to revitalize pedagogies of difference, particularly Freire's dialogical engagement between teachers and learners. I believe that it is a useful exercise for teachers to become learners and learners, teachers. Such role shift is not merely about teachers sharing power or equalizing the power relationship. Failing to see the dual role that we each play as teacher/learner may serve to retrench existing social hierarchies. For instance, in the past 10 years, the Canadian government has engaged various stakeholders to improve foreign credential recognition practices (Guo & Shan, 2013). These initiatives are welcome. However, immigrant professionals who have the largest stake in the issue of qualification still do not get to have a voice on the value of their knowledge and practice. Instead, they are further objectified as the objects of assessments against Canadian standards and competencies. What is missed is an important opportunity for Canadian industries, professions, and workplaces to learn about and from the knowledge and practices in other cultures and places.

In addition to encouraging people to experiment with the dual position of teacher/learner, the distributed pedagogy also attends to non-human things and the coming together of human and non-human entities that are constitutive of practices, cultures, and spaces. A place-based practice can be perceived as bounded and enclosed, with non-human things (symbols, texts, and artifacts), rules, and institutional organizations sustaining its stability. In the context of globalization and immigration, however, a seemingly place-based practice may as well be articulated to and networked into a place, a practice, or a culture far away, although such articulation and networking may not be instantly intelligible. The incoming of immigrants and a pedagogical orientation to teach and learn *with* immigrants presents an opportunity to make visible the boundary of existing practice as well as the possibility to build new associations, communities, and networks across place. The process of making visible and building new assemblage and associations may help us challenge or even disrupt the existing order of socio-cultural and socio-material practices.

Conclusions and Limitations

This paper advances a distributed pedagogy in the context of mobility and diversity. In a climate where socio-cultural differences are automatically associated with deficiency, I argue that encounters of difference could also provide a potentially productive and permeable space to not only challenge the hegemony of the West, but also advance knowledge and practices across places. This paper endeavours to turn differences into a space of learning and teaching for all as well as a point of expansion for socio-cultural and socio-material practices. To this end, I turned to pedagogies of difference and practice-based learning for inspiration. Pedagogies of difference have historically emphasized the importance to recognize, respect, and integrate into curriculum different voices and cultures, equalize relationship between teachers and students, build participatory capacity of minoritized groups, and raise the consciousness of people about exploitation and marginalization. These proposals formulate part of my vision for a distributed pedagogy. Practice-based ontology of learning sees learning and development as an effect of socio-cultural and socio-material practices. Through resorting to practice-based learning, I am able to redistribute the learning and teaching responsibility among all members, human and non-human, that

are constitutive of a practice. The idea of a distributed pedagogy of difference could be useful in different educational settings. The fact that immigrants are disadvantaged in the host labour market due to socio-cultural differences makes this pedagogical exploration particularly relevant to immigrant education and training.

The distributed pedagogy of difference contains three major proposals. The first is to turn differences into a strength-based curriculum. The second is to engage differences for the advancement of practice. It involves identification of difference not only for the purpose of co-existence but also for the creation of genuine human connections. It also requires reflection to learn about the thought world of others as well as the thought world of the selves. It further requires coordination, or bringing together different practices for productive purposes. Finally, it may lead to transformation—i.e., bringing changes to individuals, and giving rise to hybrid ways of doing and relating. The third proposal is to experiment with socio-cultural and socio-material order. It involves teachers becoming learners and learners, teachers. It is also about setting into relief the connections that humans and non-human entities play in sustaining and destabilizing existing order and practice in the context of globalization.

It is my firm belief that conscious engagement of socio-cultural differences may lead to destabilization and re-orchestration of practices, which may not only serve the purpose of social inclusion but also lead to innovation and excellence in practice. I am, however, aware that it is dangerous to attempt to guide contextualized and localized practices with a set of general proposals. Yet, these proposals for a distributed pedagogy may serve as an initial heuristic for trainers and educators interested in alternative ways to work with immigrants. As well, these proposals are not meant to be fixed or closed. Rather, they are subject to elaboration, interrogation, and (re)construction. In fact, the paper is significant precisely because it may open further pedagogical discussion in the field of immigrant training and education.

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