

BOOK REVIEWS

Schuetze, H.G. & Sweet, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Integrating School and Workplace Learning in Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 289 pages. (Hardcover).

This edited book by Schuetze and Sweet presents a range of school and workplace learning opportunities for readers living within the new global economy. The book provides snapshots of school-workplace learning offerings within the context of Canadian provinces and thus stimulates discussion about the complexities of education-workplace dynamics.

Subsequent to World War II and the resultant affluence, post-secondary education in Canada entered a boom period of expansion and diversification. New universities were built and alternative forms of higher education, such as the community colleges and technical institutes, were developed. The vision was accessibility to all qualified students, regardless of age or gender, and the preparation of more sophisticated employees for urban workplaces. Regardless of where students lived in Canada and whatever their socio-economic status, opportunities seemed endless. Canada was to be an inclusive multicultural democracy, a model of peace and harmony among developed nations. Fifty years later, some aspects of this national dream have been tarnished. Current constraints include increased tuition, aging infrastructures, reduced numbers of tenured faculty members, and a corporate accountability approach to academia.

Nevertheless, the demand for more education continues unabated, even though it is obvious there are gaps in delivery, students who falter and flounder, and employer-employee mismatches. What are the new problems?

Integrating School and Workplace Learning in Canada provides some answers to this question and sheds light on many of the issues. It is not the first edited book that attempts to do so. The first national conference to address social concerns that were barriers for youth in transition was edited by B. Galoway and J. Hudson in 1996. Contributors focused upon marginalized students, such as aboriginals and the homeless, teenage sexuality and drugs, youth-at-risk, and other challenges in the lives of adolescents. This focus was not surprising be-

cause the federal agencies responsible for sponsoring the conference and contributing to subsequent publication included the National Welfare Grants program, Human Resource Development Canada, and the Social Development and Education Group.

In Canada, responsibility for education is at the provincial level of governance and federal politicians must use a back door when entering the larger dialogue about how young citizens should be supported in their development. Schools are run by professional teachers who deliver mandated curricula established by their respective provincial Ministries of Education. Although the majority of students eventually complete high school requirements by the age of 25 years, many employers have been critical of the ability of young people to integrate into complex workplaces. At the same time Canadian workplace environments are restructuring to compete in a global economy. In spite of a variety of linkage programs between schools and community partners, something is not right. Scholars in a variety of disciplines have conducted research about student transitions, educational institutional dynamics, funding support and policies, and the information age. However, findings have not been disseminated widely and few projects have been sustained over time.

The key concept upon which this new book is based defines "alternation" when school-based learning is integrated with practical skills developed within workplace environments. Students who are exposed to both of these worlds have the benefit of applying aspects of their formal learning within a constructive work situation. This volume offers illustrative examples about how these dynamics occur among secondary school teenagers and extend to young adults within college and university environments.

The thesis of Schuetze and Sweet's book is addressed by providing results from various research projects that address diverse components of the problem. The book is divided into two sections. Part one consists of a comparison of alternation models and jurisdictions with chapters by Heinz on the school-work model used in Germany; Payeux, Edmond, and Caron discuss the Quebec regional perspective towards education and training; and, an examination by Schuetze of Canadian secondary and post-secondary education and workplace models. At the conclusion of this section readers are provided with a range of types, functions, and issues connected to student education-work opportunities. Part two focuses upon alternation in Canada by exploring examples of education and workplace offerings. Andres

writes on the challenge of matching education and skills for life and work. Smaller focuses on vocational education in Ontario, and Hardy and Parent describe school-workplace collaboration in Quebec. A shorter subsection on post-secondary opportunities includes college training (Gallagher and Kitching), students' conceptions of their experience with co-op programs (Grosjean), professional training for teachers (Puk), and bridging gaps between liberal and applied education (Axelrod, Anisef, and Lin). Workplace learning environments include Sharpe's chapter about apprenticeship in Canada, followed by Sweet's focus upon women within apprenticeship programs. The concluding chapter outlines some research implications derived from the authors' insights.

Strengths of the Book

The editors invited researchers who work in isolation at universities scattered throughout the country to identify new ways of addressing the principles of education and training in Canada. While this form of education-workplace learning is in its infancy, the editors are to be commended for their commitment and progressive stance in assembling a diversified base that provides an array of programmatic research. This volume will be an excellent reference book for those who conduct research in this area, for committed researcher-practitioners interested in developing new school-workplace programs, and for policy makers and development officers who carry out governmental mandates, whether in provincial or federal jurisdictions.

The breadth and quality of each chapter is concise, succinct, and presents a convincing argument for the importance and need for non-traditional forms of education-workplace opportunities for young people. For example, Gallagher and Kitching's chapter about community colleges provides an excellent overview of the various phases of institutional development as colleges progressed from trade and apprenticeship training to cooperative education programs and short-term internship opportunities. Colleges have actively become key providers of intermediate skill-level education and offer ways to promote laddering and bridging programs for the Canadian workforce.

To highlight another example, Grosjean applies Swedish, Scottish, and British European research results about learning to Canadian students' conceptions of learning from co-operative education. This phenomenological research approach reveals why and how it is effective.

tive for students to systematically alternate between school-workplace environments throughout their programs. While these innovations appear successful, qualitative research results rarely probe why they are effective, or what might be done to enhance or develop more of these types of educational-workplace opportunities. If these learning environments could be studied as living laboratories to explore students' conceptions of their experiences, then results might offer insights into the reasons why such programs are important to Canada's future, as well as elsewhere.

Limitations of the Book

A key limitation of the text relates to the nature of the Canadian system with respect to education. Individually, provincial governments are committed to deliver the best possible educational system for students within their jurisdiction and generally they do that well. Collectively, Canada expends a great deal of money upon formal education but there is little political will to collaborate beyond sharing success stories. One reason lobby groups such as the Conference Board of Canada have become so powerful is that they are better organized at a national level. However, the vision of the Conference Board might stimulate exemplary citizenship from a business perspective, but it is not consistent with the earlier mandate of Canadian higher education which was to provide all students with inclusive, affordable, and relevant education. Scholarly research, as this book illustrates, is comprised of fragmented, short-term projects that address some aspects of the problem but not the larger dynamic. Thus at this level, the publication is a mirror of the larger problem.

For example, part-time work influences many more students' transition from school (whatever the level) than all linkage programs combined. Between the ages of 15 and 25, most Canadian youth work part-time. The experience may have a maturing effect, embellish a resume, and provide useful references and employment networks. However, research has clearly established that more than 15 hours per week is deleterious and many students feel the push-pull of wages, employee status, and escalating hours that compete with classroom requirements. Little research has been done on this form of "alternation."

The word "alternation" itself, used to provide a theoretical framework for this publication, seems stilted and academic. While admiring

the editors' desire to provide a vocabulary that would clarify some of the issues, the word does not effect cohesion because most readers will not understand it. What is wrong with "linkage programs," or "school-to-work" programs? These phrases are common to most practitioners and employers. Academics, themselves, will speak to only a narrow range of readers if they invent a sub-set vocabulary.

Another weakness is to differentiate Quebec from "the rest of Canada". This demeaning phrase, first coined by political separatists minimizes pan-Canadian regional differences. Quebec probably has the most integrated educational system in North America but it has its own set of barriers. Problems in the Northern Territories are not the same as those in Atlantic Canada, and Alberta work environments are very different from those in British Columbia and Ontario. Although English might be the working language of most Canadians, school and workplace learning opportunities vary within all provinces.

Future program developments will be more informed if academics are as pragmatic as youth who are living through the transition or practitioners who try to alleviate barriers by effectively bridging the various siloed worlds of education and employment. It is a very expensive waste of talent, public monies, and of private initiatives when school and workplace experiences are not well integrated, a luxury Canada cannot afford. That is why Schuetze and Sweets' edited book and the various chapter authors deserve a wide readership. They have made a scholarly contribution to knowledge about a problem that erodes the quality of life in our country and affects the sustainable future of its citizens.

Researchers also must have the courage to tackle aspects of the issue that are not being addressed. These include immigrant expectations that are not consonant with available employment or educational opportunities. Many of these people have high aspirations for their children and many are not interested in technical or apprenticeship programs where the greatest employment demand is located. Some Canadian-born students who flounder might benefit more from taking a year of "time-out" rather than a sponsored "stay in school" program. Other deserving students cannot afford the high tuition demanded by cash starved post-secondary institutions. The outcomes of perennial options of non-academic routes such as travel or exchange programs, or technical and apprentice trades are rarely studied. Life-long learning is ideal but tracking the movement of adults through various systems, whether education or employment, is expensive re-

search to design and implement, so this sub-set of students is understudied, particularly re-entry women students. The scope of the issue is beyond the ability of individuals, the federal government or any one provincial Ministry, but the political will to collaborate at a national level is absent, as are governmental policy infrastructures and research agenda.

Summary

This book contributes to an increasing body of research about youth in transition and has the specific focus of school and workplace learning environments. It provides an overview of the historical, present, and future demands affecting the Canadian educational and socio-economic sectors. The strengths of the book include the quality of the reported research but the discussion is limited because collaboration occurs most when researchers, workplaces, and educational stakeholders are brought together regularly for a national dialogue. To date that goal has not been attained in Canada.

Attention to this larger problem, however, is slowly increasing. For example, in November, 2004, York University in Toronto, hosted the first *Canadian Student Experience* conference, with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Researchers from across Canada were invited to present papers about the patterns, prospects, and policies within the range of Canadian student experiences. Attendance was greater than anticipated, but few government and industry leaders were present. Given the pressures, student needs are increasing. More learners are progressing from undergraduate to doctoral education with the goal of preparing for workplace opportunities outside of traditional academia.

Schuetze and Sweet's edited book indicates that greater attention to education-workplace issues and the ways in which these two environments can interact is required. In conclusion, the time has come for an ongoing national consultation about education / workplace perspectives that would facilitate a national strategy to respond to this critical problem. The issue affects Canada's future at home and is an international problem.

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