



**Practical logic: Curriculum structures in an adult education  
program**

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## **Abstract**

This case study examines influences on the selection and delivery of knowledge in the employment preparation provision of a trade union in British Columbia. Bernstein's theories of curricular code and Bourdieu's perspectives on social and cultural capital are used to analyse data collected by interviews, observation, and documentary analysis. The emergent themes are organisational structure, pedagogic practice, diversity and difference, and the good employee ideal, with each of these demonstrating the tension between the philosophical orientation of the organisation, as a representative of the labour movement, and the demands of the funding and policy structures within which it operates. Analysis illustrates the way curriculum is shaped by forces external to the immediate educational setting, the most pervasive being the requirement to function as an effective means of transferring cultural and social capital to unemployed people. The possibility of using employment preparation as a mechanism to achieve progressive ends is severely limited by the need to acknowledge the priorities of funders, administrators, learners, and the neo-liberal backdrop against which the programs operate. The study implies approaches to curriculum emphasising decisions taken by instructors and learners mask wider structural influences on knowledge formation, and more research on the sociology of knowledge in adult education is called for.

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## **Acknowledgement**

**UTP**

**My teachers**

**My students**

**My friends**

**(My dog)**

**John Coltrane**

## **Introduction**

I began my career as an adult educator in Scotland, working as a community educator in peripheral housing estates around Edinburgh. While they were never expressed in these terms, the questions arising continually were “what is worth knowing?” and “what use is this information?” These questions underpin my continuing interest in curriculum of adult education, an unusual arena for research but, I believe, a critical one.

This study sets out to follow up on that interest by asking about the structures that influence the selection and delivery of knowledge in one adult education program. Educational settings reflect a whole series of interests and objectives, permeating both the pedagogic aspects and the knowledge lying at the core of the process. By asking what these interests and objectives are, and how they have the influence they do, it is possible to understand the determining factors shaping the present form of employment preparation programs. My approach is to start with the curriculum, which I view as the essence of any educational process, and attempt to make the influences on the selection and delivery of knowledge visible. While the structures surrounding education may themselves be unobservable, their manifestation in concrete educational practices allows them to be examined.

The site of this study is an employment preparation program, an expanding form of labour market training setting out to increase the ability and motivation of unemployed individuals to find and keep work. While it is necessary in this study to



discuss the political and economic philosophy lying behind current forms of labour market training I do not set out to evaluate employment preparation programs as such. My central task is to understand the influences that have created the employment preparation curriculum of a single setting in British Columbia as an example of processes occurring in any adult education setting. The patterns of knowledge within labour market training can be considered as a code, or a grammar, and my central concern in this project is to ask where that code came from and how it is made manifest. When the instructor stands up in front of a class of twenty unemployed people, what influences the practices that are legitimate? How do they know what to say, and how to say it?

In order to examine the structures around employment preparation as a form of adult education I conducted a case study of a single setting, referred to in this document as the Union Training Project (UTP). Data collection involved work with half a dozen instructors and around ten administrators and government representatives. In addition, I spent many hours in the classroom, observing the group in action and talking informally with participants, as well as examining many policy and administrative documents. From this experience I was able to build a collection of data running from the intricate details of everyday interaction to the broad strokes of policy design. Linking structures to practices involves pulling these different levels of data together, and attempting to understand how the people and policies interact in this particular program.

One of the most interesting dimensions of the study is the placement of that program within a trade union training centre, creating a situation where adult education is set at the confluence of two different approaches to employment issues. This situation gave rise to patterns of tension throughout the organisational and educational forms adopted by UTP.

The central theoretical framework of this study is Bernstein's work on curricular codes, which uses the strength of various factors in the educational setting as a means to analyse the cultural significance of the process taking place. While Bernstein's work provides a rigorous structure for data collection and initial analysis it is not prescriptive, and I introduce Bourdieu's theories of capital as a complementary explanatory framework. In the study I use Bernstein's frames as a means to identify four specific dimensions of the employment preparation setting, each of which is discussed in a thematic chapter before being brought back together in the last section. These dimensions represent significantly problematic areas within UTP's programs, as the philosophy of the organisation, and the wider labour movement, come up against the limits of the policy context. Examining such contradictions is a well established way of asking critical questions about educational settings, since it is an effective means of demonstrating differences between the claimed end of programs and their demonstrable effects. An example from UTP is that of the organisational management style. The managers espouse a democratic, inclusionary philosophy, yet to maintain this in the face of various pressures affecting the agency they have to impose it autocratically. This

contradiction leads to tensions around the view of the worker developed by program participants. On one hand, the overt curriculum supports the idea of the participative workplace, but on the other the organisational form demonstrates a far more hierarchical model.

These tensions are important to my analysis since I approach employment preparation with a fair amount of scepticism. Both my own experience and my theoretical background of neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critique of cultural forms and discourse make it natural for me to question the ends of these programs. I view employment preparation programs as the product of a decade long attempt to shift responsibility for, and the effects of, industrial restructuring from corporate employers and the state onto individuals, and especially those individuals who are historically disadvantaged by the structures of capitalism. UTP is trying to do something interesting within the discourse of labour market training by asking how the resources can be used to create a more holistic and supportive form of education that furthers the interests of subaltern groups. The contradiction between the aims of UTP and the “official” aims of employment preparation policy create a fascinating opportunity to understand more about the uses of adult education.

I will acknowledge immediately that my perspective makes me a hard sell on the advantages and possibilities of working within the employment preparation field. While I have a great deal of admiration for everybody involved in UTP and the work they do, I was initially convinced that there are fundamental constraints built into the current labour market training system, and that however willing to aim for

radical ends we may be, the most likely outcome is that employment preparation programs will collapse back into preparation of a low cost labour force. However, my opinion did change over the research period as I grew to see the possibility for incremental change such programs could potentially offer. They may never support fully fledged radical education, but they do offer opportunities for asking questions about the nature of work and how it could be different. As I collected and analysed data I tried to remain reflective about my own beliefs, and to be sensitive to the changes occurring over time.

The structure of this report follows my analysis quite closely, and I came to think of it as having three parts. Part One is chapters 1 to 3, where I describe my question, the methodology and method adopted, the setting, and the policy contexts of labour market training and of union education. Chapters 4 to 8 are Part Two, including a description of Bernstein's framework and Bourdieu's approach to capital, followed by empirical details of UTP programs. This part is not intended to explain the curricular structures in the project, but to highlight their existence. In Part Three, chapter 9 and the conclusion, I provide explanatory analysis of the curriculum at UTP, pulling together the threads identified in the earlier chapters. My overall intent is to situate the analytical arguments within a detailed description of the complexities of the educational setting, hopefully ensuring that other adult educators can pick up this document and find it helpful for reflection upon their own situation. It would be even better if one were to become sufficiently

inspired to contribute their own insights and understandings of the development of curriculum in adult education.

In closing this introduction, I would like to thank all at UTP who provided me with access to documents, classrooms, and staff meetings. I remain extremely impressed by the work being done at UTP, and admire their willingness to push employment preparation programs as far as they could go. Many people have benefited enormously from the work of UTP, and learned a great deal there. I am honoured to include myself in their number.

## **Chapter 1: Knowledge In Adult Education**

My approach to knowledge in this study is to view it as a social artefact, created to serve a purpose, and my working definition of knowledge is “any and every set of ideas and acts accepted by one or another social group or society of people— ideas and acts pertaining to what they accept as real for themselves and for others” (McCarthy, 1996, p.23). This perspective does not set out to evaluate knowledge against truth claims, but supports an interest in the value assigned to knowledge in particular settings. The questions raised include how knowledge is assigned value, and what the purpose of that process is. Knowledge is considered as an active construction, an ongoing act of creation rather than a single static corpus. What we know is embedded within the ways in which we know it, and who we are.

In this chapter I set out the problem this study will address, and how I will address it. The first half of the chapter deals with knowledge itself, showing one way it has been dealt with by theorists of initial education and then discussing the relative lack of emphasis on knowledge by analysts of adult education. The second half is methodological, describing what I did in the process of this case study, and why I chose to apply those methods.

### **Considering Curriculum**

One of the places where the social process of knowledge formation can be seen most clearly is within educational curricula. The curriculum, or “. . . that reconstruction of knowledge and experience, systematically developed under the

auspices of the school (or the university), to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience” (Tanner & Tanner, 1980, p.38), is not a natural phenomenon. It is a process by which instructors, and others, create a set of information by shaping knowledge into a particular form. One of the most important acts in this creation is selecting the information to be included and, by that inclusion, given credibility and value. As Williams argues,

. . . what has been thought of as simple distribution is in fact an active shaping to particular social ends. It is also that the content of education, which is subject to great historical variation, again expresses, again both consciously and unconsciously, certain basic elements in the culture, what is thought of as “an education” being in fact a particular selection, a particular set of emphases and omissions. (1961, p.125)

By selecting particular information and moving it into the curriculum, educators do more than relocate knowledge, they also recontextualise and transform it. They change it from a part of everyday experience into one component of a value driven system of meaning. Knowledge shaped into the curriculum is quite different from that in more naturalistic settings since it has become part of a process of transmission. One example is English, where learning the grammar of the language is quite different from using it for communication. Both the means and the ends of the activity are dissimilar, and there is a particularly interesting divergence in criteria for success. Whereas in everyday speech it is sufficient to be understood, making English into a subject involves finding a way to compare the learner’s ability with some ideal form of language use. A similar process applies within employment preparation programs regarding learning how to do well at job

interviews. The procedure of attending discussions on what employers are looking for at an interview and going through a number of videotaped practice runs is not the same as actually attending a job interview. It is a recreation of that experience which has been designed and delivered by an educational institution, and again the criteria for success have changed from getting a job to impressing the instructors. A useful way to acknowledge the recontextualisation of information is to think of curriculum as a means of codifying knowledge so that it represents, but is not identical to, the original phenomenon.

As Williams suggests, the recodification of experience into a curriculum is not a neutral process, and will tend to reflect the values and interests of those who have influence over the educational setting. The traditional curriculum of the high school, for example, shows its roots in the industrial age by valuing white collar academic subjects more than blue collar vocational subjects, and by imposing strict attendance and punctuality rules. The school, as a system for transmitting patterns of knowledge, is similar in its structure and demands to the workplace for which it is preparing learners. Foucault (cf. 1980) has shown how powerful knowledge can be as a tool to shape the attitude of a whole society towards sexual behaviour or psychiatric conditions, and curriculum is an extremely effective way to privilege certain ways of thinking about the world. Because of the power associated with the curriculum, there are continuing struggles in initial education over the knowledge, values, and beliefs that should be given legitimacy in schools, and by extension, what interests should be served. Recent debates in BC schools over the acceptability



of gay positive books in elementary school libraries have been vitriolic because of the cultural power of curriculum. The religious activists who oppose the inclusion of the books are aware that permitting their presence in the legitimate knowledge store of the school sends out the message that same sex partnerships are themselves legitimate, a message inconsistent with their understanding of the Bible. The presence of a few small hardcover books is far less important than what they symbolise within the school.

Adult education contains the potential for similar struggles over the definition of what is worth knowing. In this case study, for example, one pressing question is whether employment preparation programs should set out to raise awareness of the gendered nature of the workforce. Further concerns include the extent to which using education in a coercive and punitive manner is acceptable, and what should be regarded as a successful outcome. The answer to each of these questions will be quite different depending on the interests such programs serve. The policy context of labour market training strongly suggests that the interests recognised will be primarily those of employers, and this will tend to perpetuate the current system of ruling relations. However, I believe that the process of curriculum formation is always continuing, and not nearly so one sided in practice. There is room for resistance, and for alternative approaches to curriculum formation.

In this study I set out to shed some light on curriculum formation in one adult education program. I approach this objective by demonstrating significant

areas of tension surrounding the formation and delivery of curricular knowledge within four specific themes. Employment preparation at Union Training Project, as with any form of education, exists as a tenuous balance of competing interests. This research aims to identify those interests and show how they come together to define what is possible within this particular adult education setting.

### Theoretical Approach

My analysis is inspired by the “new sociology of education,” a set of theoretical perspectives developed in the 1970s, largely in the UK. This movement was among the first to argue that the “sociology of education is no longer conceived as the area of enquiry distinct from the sociology of knowledge” (Young, 1971, p.3), and this claim strongly influenced the research agenda for the members of the movement. They viewed education as a means of transmitting knowledge favouring the interests of capital, and their analysis encompassed historical and contemporary studies of formal and informal educational settings. They were interested in how social forms are reproduced through education and in how people could, and do, fight against this reproduction in a process of resistance.

The new sociologists argue that educational knowledge achieves two objectives in a capitalist society. The first of these is stratification, the division of people into classes with differential access to economic and cultural rewards. The classic study of stratification from this era is Bowles and Gintis’(1977) work. As Marxist economists they approached education from a correspondence standpoint, predicting that the delivery of education will correspond with the needs of the

economic base, and they concluded that “the structure of the educational experience is admirably suited to nurturing attitudes and behaviour consistent with participation in the labour force” (1977, p.9). Schools “create and reinforce patterns of social class, racial and sexual identification among students which allow them to relate ‘properly’ to their eventual standing in the hierarchy of authority and status in the production process” (p.11). Rather than being an innocent selection of useful information, curricular knowledge helps to reproduce and maintain social hierarchy.

The educational legitimization of social stratification provides an apparently transparent justification for class and other differential structures such as ethnicity or gender, disguising them as a product of ability or effort. By doing so, “education helps defuse and depoliticize the potentially explosive class relations of the production process, and thus serves to perpetuate the social, political, and economic conditions through which a portion of the product of labor is expropriated in the form of profits” (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p.11). Education provides an explanation for the material disparities of our society, and also participates in its reproduction by obscuring more fundamental inequities of opportunity and resources under a blanket of meritocracy.

The second purpose education serves for capital is incorporation, the process by which the “organisations of the working class are accommodated within capitalist society” and the “working class consciousness has been shaped by the values and interests of other, dominant, classes” (Jary & Jary, 1995, p.311). One

example pertinent to this study is the acceptance of trade union legitimacy by capitalist classes, and the invitation extended to labour representatives to participate in mainstream political processes. At the end of the 20th century the notion of incorporation has extended beyond the working class to embrace many marginalised groups. The disputes about the inclusion of gay and lesbian positive material in schools mentioned earlier can be analysed as a dispute over incorporation.

Incorporation helps to ensure the continuance of capitalist social structures by legitimising inequality, and helping to ensure that calls for change are of a reformist rather than a radical nature. By drawing in and domesticating oppositional interests the incorporating function of education helps to “create people who see no other serious possibility to the economic and cultural assemblage now extant” (Apple, 1990, p.6). Once people buy into the status quo it is more difficult for them to organise in alternative ways, and the possibility of social forms unfriendly to capitalism emerging is reduced.

Both stratification and incorporation are important themes to consider in analysing labour market training. The aim of employment preparation is to assist individuals to find work, reflecting two assumptions. The first is that any employment is valuable irrespective of benefits, pay, or security, and the general tendency is for employment programs to target entry level jobs. Participants move from public support to the lowest rung of employment, reinforcing social stratification by implying that unemployed people possess neither the skills or the

motivation to function in more challenging settings. The second assumption is that individual responses to unemployment are sufficient, suggesting that being without work is more of a personal trouble than a public issue. Acceptance of this assertion is a form of incorporation, since it negates the possibility of people coming together to demand that high quality employment matters more than corporate profits. Taken together, the stratifying and incorporating effects of employment preparation can present a picture of the unemployed as a deficient underclass, choosing to avoid employment, but capable of achieving redemption through education and encouragement.

However, one of the strongest themes of later versions of the new sociology is that stratification and incorporation are not seamless. Employment preparation is not just about unemployed people being shaped according to the needs of capital, it is also about participants making their own decisions and reaching their own understanding of the way work fits into their life. There is resistance to the notion that an entry level job is the ultimate aim, by instructors and administrators as much as by participants. The idea that unemployment is the fault of the individual is challenged both formally and informally, as classroom discussions touch on issues such as the relative shrinkage of resource sector employment in BC. Tension between the reproduction of capital interests and resistance to these perspectives permeates the entire educational experience of employment preparation. The new sociology of education provides a useful entry point to understanding this tension.

One interesting example of the application of new sociology to adult education is Shapin and Barnes' (1976) discussion of Mechanic's Institutes, in which they set out to "show how the founders of British Mechanic's Institutes thought a scientific education would aid in the social control of those artisans who were their designated target" (p.55). The central idea was that scientific knowledge would be presented as fact rather than theoretical conjecture, thereby justifying the natural order of society. There was even a catechism which started from the digestive system and led to God's attitude to stealing. This paper is a nicely written description of an adult education setting claiming to be democratising, but instead working to maintain stratification and incorporate a potentially troublesome class element through a carefully crafted curriculum. Many current observers of employment preparation would find this analysis all too familiar.

In the present study I have used the work of Basil Bernstein, a key member of the new sociology school, to create a framework for my curricular analysis. As I explain at more length in chapter 4, Bernstein's approach allows a number of tensions in the curriculum of employment preparation to be identified, and suggests ways to conceptualise the influences contributing to these tensions. By no means is this analysis meant to be final, but it does offer insight into the structure of a particular educational setting in a particular place and at a particular time. Creating a code of recontextualised knowledge coming to be accepted as the obvious, common sense curriculum of an educational setting is a multi-faceted process, and the aim of this study is to identify the most significant aspects of that process for

one group of educators. The tensions identified using Bernstein's framework are discussed in more depth in the later thematic chapters before being pulled together in chapter 9.

In the years since the new sociology of education first appeared there have been many developments in the theoretical understanding of education. The central ideas of the new sociology, such as the importance of knowledge forms, have been influential in many arenas including the development of critical pedagogy in North America. Michael Apple has stated "I am happy to acknowledge Bernstein's influence on my own thinking about how 'official knowledge,' as both content and form, was implicated in the reproduction and subversion of power relations" (Apple, 1992, p. 128). Similarly, the interest taken by the new sociology movement in culture as a medium for both reproduction and resistance (cf. Willis, 1977) can be seen as one of the antecedents of contemporary cultural studies and identity based analyses of educational process. While the majority of the empirical case study is based on Bernstein's framework, chapter 9 takes the tensions identified and contextualises them using the work of Bourdieu on social reproduction. The work of the two writers is highly complementary, and using them in this way allows for detailed description of the process at UTP to be followed by a deeper analysis of specific factors bearing upon the curriculum. Developments in educational theory since the structuralist new sociology are not dismissed, but the application of structuralism is centrally placed because that theoretical approach fits very well with the questions addressed in this study.

The selection and delivery of knowledge in employment preparation provision matters a great deal, because if it is solely reproductive of employers' interests participants will experience the programs as nothing more than coercive attempts to make them work for unsatisfactory money in unsatisfactory jobs. The programs will reinforce their status as members of the lowest rung of society, and will explain to them why they should be happy about it. However, this is not the whole story, because employment preparation also represents a site of resistance with administrators, instructors, and participants struggling to achieve more than quick entry into a low level job. As with any educational setting, the curriculum emerges from the coming together of specific structures with particular people with certain life experiences to create a unique context. It is within this confluence that I try to understand the patterns of knowledge in UTP adult education programs.

### Curriculum In Adult Education

Curriculum has not received a great deal of attention in adult education. It is quite surprising that there is not more interest in this topic given that the new sociology of education began to make an impact in schooling almost 30 years ago (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). In many discussions the curriculum of adult education is a black box, much as that of initial schooling was up until the early 1970's (Nesbit, 1998). Rubenson (1989) has suggested that North American adult educators have "defined and conceptualized their research problems within a predominantly psychological framework" (p. 52), and have neglected the sociological dimensions of the field. He further argues that "the challenge is to develop a perspective that



incorporates the imperialism of the subject found in interpretative sociologies with the imperialism of the social object found in functionalism and structuralism” (p.66). It seems to me that the interrogation of knowledge in adult education is an interesting way to pull these traditions together, yet in North America, the discussions are still dominated by instrumental and technical questions, while the British literature tends to political rhetoric more than to empirical curricular research. In both arenas there is often a liberal democratic assumption that the participatory and voluntary nature of adult education will ensure that knowledge is unproblematic. Continental Europe has maintained a far stronger interest in the sociology of knowledge as applied to adult education than the Anglo-American research project, and Germany and Scandinavia have developed particularly interesting ways to combine subject centred narrative and structural analysis (cf. Mader, 1992).

Selman and Dampier (1991) present the lack of interest in the adult education curriculum as a matter of terminology. They suggest that the appropriate adult education concept is program planning. “This term is preferred to the one used in formal education, namely curriculum development, because program planning is seen as being broader in its considerations” (p. 108). However, program planning is also a great deal more pragmatic in its focus, suggesting seating arrangements and refreshment breaks more than analysis of educational epistemology. While recent work in adult education program planning is beginning to expand its interest in issues of power there is little evidence of a concomitant

focus on knowledge as the manifestation and reproductive mechanism for power structures. I believe knowledge itself must be seen as a central problem of adult education, and it follows that curriculum is a critical area of investigation.

Despite the relative scarcity of discussion on curriculum, some interesting examples do exist. In many ways, these examples also demonstrate the difference between British and North American approaches. One influential book in the UK was *Adult education for a change* (Thompson, 1980), an edited collection presenting radical and feminist analyses of adult education, including curriculum. This collection was arguably one of the most important books of the decade for adult educators interested in social change, and the feminist interest in the curriculum of adult education continued to be strong for a number of years. One example of this interest is Gaskell's (1991) examination of the curriculum of a job preparation program, and the contestation of knowledge and gender roles that arose.

Thompson's collection contained an interesting article by Keddie (1980) in which she argues that adult education has a great deal in common with primary or elementary education. In fact, she questions whether adult education has a distinct form at all, "since it is more likely that it attracts the students it does because it confirms their established notions about the nature and purposes of education" (p.53). More than this, she suggests that the curriculum of adult education can be seen as an extension of initial schooling. While this is not the place to explore these arguments in depth, it is worth noting that one of the few attempts to engage with the knowledge content of adult education was not written by an adult educator.

One of the few full length books on curriculum in adult education, as opposed to program planning, was written by Griffin (1983), a British curriculum theorist. In it, the writer bemoans the lack of curriculum theory in adult education, and suggests the little that does exist falls into one of three categories. The first of these is based on the notion of adult knowledge, and Griffin suggests that the critical element of this approach to curriculum theorisation is an attempt to differentiate adult education from initial education. He argues that this approach to knowledge tends to be culturally bound, and leaves little opportunity for analysis of power and other social influences upon what is taught and learned. There is an essential circularity because adult knowledge is that deemed appropriate for adults.

Griffin's second category is curriculum theory based upon andragogical principles. Malcolm Knowles' (1980) concept of andragogy has been influential globally, and can be read so as to support the idea of the educator as *tabula rasa*. In other words, the educator does not enter the educational setting with any agenda, but rather facilitates the progress of the learners towards their own goals. This self direction leads to the learners gaining experience in autonomy, and developing as active citizens. Knowles has "proclaimed an ideology of middle-class America with an emphasis on self-reliance and self-fulfilment in which private interests overshadow public ends" (Pratt, 1993, p.20). From this perspective, sociological analysis of adult education and the knowledge it works with almost seems futile, not to mention un-American! Griffin further emphasises the failure of andragogy to

be more than a theory of adult learning and its inapplicability as a curricular theory of adult education.

The third of Griffin's categories is the analysis of structures of provision. Approaching curriculum from this perspective leads quickly to a confusion of categories which obscure the discussion of knowledge and lead to analysis of strategic approaches. This category is quite pervasive in the political or policy-based analysis of adult education, and while it offers insight in many cases, it is not sufficient grounds for the development of curricular theory because it fails to link knowledge to politics.

Griffin ends his book by calling for a curricular theory of adult education which sets out

. . . to explore the ways in which its aims, content and methods transform or reproduce the knowledge categories of schooling. For unless it demonstrably transforms them, the claims of adult and lifelong education to achieve social policy objectives will remain difficult to make out. (1983, p. 206)

There are a number of arguments running through this short extract, but the most critical is that in order to effect social change adult education must understand its relationship with the forms of knowledge dominating schooling. A call for social change cannot be based upon a belief that adult knowledge is different, that adults learn differently, or that institutional providers are unique. Griffin believes that a more fundamental analysis of knowledge in adult education is called for, and I follow him in this argument. The sophistication of analysis brought to initial schooling has been lacking in adult education, and I believe that

Griffin is correct to argue that “the primary conceptual framework of adult education . . . has been constructed in terms of needs, access, and provision rather than in terms of knowledge, culture, and power” (1983, p.38).

Griffin’s book is strongly political, and reflects the British adult education scene of the early 80s very well. The North American scene, as I suggested earlier, is quite different, and has given rise to a more pragmatic approach to curriculum in adult education. From Tyler’s (1949) work onwards the central concern has been the design of adult education rather than the interactions fitting within that design, and most North American writing does not fit within my concept of curriculum analysis.

This can be illustrated by Langenbach’s (1993) work on curriculum theory in adult education. Though in some ways he does engage with matters of knowledge more than many other writers the overall approach of the book remains firmly technicist. He apparently wishes to present readers with a series of frameworks they can apply to their own work, and in 208 pages lays out details of 13 different approaches to planning adult education. A fair amount is inevitably left out, including the social and political context of the models and the problem of what constitutes valid knowledge. For example, he manages to present Freire’s work as a liberal democratic project and avoid mentioning the influences of class struggle and Liberation Theology. I suggest that Langenbach’s book is rooted far more strongly in program planning than curriculum theory.

One book which may prove to be influential in North America is *Planning Responsibly for Adult Education* (Cervero & Wilson, 1994), which argues for an analysis of interests as part of the program development process. However, the notion of power represented in this book is relatively uncritical, and the subtext of the book is how the educator can do what they want to. The individualistic and liberal focus undermines what starts out as a promising discussion of contextual program planning, and issues of knowledge are largely ignored. Nonetheless, Cervero and Wilson do provide a clear and potentially useful critique of the dominant technical approach to program planning.

While there are several other papers and book chapters that could be mentioned, the overall picture of curriculum analysis in adult education is patchy. Despite the promise contained in Thompson (1980) sociologists of education have not continued to analyse adult education systematically, or with the same sophistication applied to initial education. It could be argued that the diasporic nature of adult education makes it far harder to analyse knowledge than within the relatively homogeneous school system, but it seems to me that this is a stronger argument for the importance of such discussions across the field. One influence tending to reduce the level of interest in curriculum theory, however, is the encroachment of competency, or outcome, based forms of adult education. The spurious accountability these approaches lend to education has a great deal of political appeal in a neo-liberal era, with curriculum rendered unproblematic by the necessity to achieve and measure the outcome. Competency frameworks are

“fundamentally undemocratic and anti-educational, and that is their value to the New Right” (Alexander & Martin, 1995, p.94). Alongside competency are the mechanisms of access to higher education through some form of accreditation of previous experience, resulting in an educational economy based on portfolios of demonstrable skills. Thompson argues that “the attempts which many of us made, and the classes which we pioneered in the 80s, in order to make ‘really useful knowledge’ accessible to the ‘disadvantaged’, especially working-class and black women, has now become an industry” (1995, p.128). The curriculum is of little interest when competencies reduce education to a product, and learners to consumers of official knowledge.

Despite this influence I believe that curriculum is an essential place for adult educators to ground and reflect upon their practice. If knowledge is the very stuff of education, educators must be able to analyse their curricular practices and appreciate the possibilities they hold. In order to do that, some theory of curriculum is required. For example, feminist critiques have provided some essential insights into the gendering of knowledge, but we must go even further and examine how this happens in concrete terms. This requires close consideration of selection, of boundaries, and of the valuing of knowledge. The lack of the theory needed for this task in adult education literature has significant implications. On the negative side, there is no corpus which an analyst can draw upon, but more positively, neither is there a tradition which must be followed. In the following pages I lay out my approach to understanding knowledge in one adult education program.

## Learning From The Case Study

The research model I used to investigate questions of knowledge within the employment preparation curriculum was a case study. There are a number of different models of case study to choose from, differing both on the level of epistemological theory and of concrete data gathering and analysis. A useful place to start designing a research project is by considering the purpose of empirical research in this particular instance. Before approaching Union Training Project (UTP) with a request for research access I had to give some consideration to what I hoped to learn there, and why it would be worth their while to allocate the organisational resources necessary to my work. It has been argued that “the problem of conceptualizing the social relations that make up our popular cultures defeats small-scale empirical analyses” (Turner, 1996, p.28), reflecting the difficulty of taking data collected in one situation and using it to create a broader understanding. The essential question is what kind of relationship exists between theory and data, and my approach is based upon the belief that one appropriate use of empirical data is to situate and enrich normative theory. Among the best examples of this use of empirical research in cultural investigation are the various works produced by the Centre for Contemporary Critical Studies (cf. Hall & Jefferson, 1976). The arguments of critical theory are applied to the everyday life of individuals and groups to create a dialogue between the richness of daily events and the explanatory power of theorisation. In this case, by looking at UTP from the



perspective of new sociology and critical pedagogy, I gained insight both into the setting as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the theories.

In terms of application, I hope this project will provide useful insights to educators interested in changing their practices (cf. Bassey, 1981). Employment preparation is as problematic and contradictory as any educational setting, and I believe that combining theory and empirical data helps to clarify and enrich my argument sufficiently for another educator to read this report and find it relevant, perhaps helping them to understand an aspect of their vocation. I know from my own experience how hard it can be to find accessible research addressing issues relevant to practice rigorously and concretely.

Conducting a single case study of an organisation such as UTP is an extremely useful way to expose curricular issues, especially when the intention is to examine them in terms of larger social structures. Focusing on a single case helps to provide a relatively clear limit to data collection and analysis, since there are only so many educators willing to give up so much time. A case study also provides a means to build understanding of how an organisation actually works, rather than merely collect data on explicit indicators. The combination of boundary and depth is summarised by Stake when he describes case studies as the exploration of a “functioning specific” (1994, p.236), referring to the uniqueness and dynamic nature of each research setting. In the case of a curricular study, it allows the researcher to understand the continuing evolution of curriculum development and delivery. Bringing this perspective to UTP allowed me to view the case as a project

containing a collection of articulated cultural and organisational structures working within and responsive its context, but finally separate from it.

Single case studies of this type can support particular types of argument, and two authors have influenced my understanding of their use. Yin (1994) provides an interesting and concrete overview of case study methodology, though he does tend to the idea that such studies are most useful for testing propositions. Single case studies are an appropriate research design in several circumstances, according to Yin. One of these circumstances is where the case is a critical example, representing a unique or particularly interesting instance of a phenomenon, and I believe that this applies to the Union Training Project. Given the different approaches to the labour market driving the union movement and the proponents of employment preparation programs, as I discuss in chapter 3, tensions around the curriculum and other aspects of the setting can reasonably be expected to rich and fascinating. One tricky question that Yin is less helpful with is the extent to which the data from a single interpretative case study can be used to explain other cases. In other words, how much of the information about curricular influences at UTP would apply to another union in another province?

Hamel presents a compelling argument to consider single cases as “singularities”, representing “a concentration of the global in the local” (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993, p.38). In many ways this approach is consistent with Yin in that a single case is not seen as a sample, but rather a *characterising example* which represents a wider set of cases. UTP does not contain all the elements found

in every employment preparation program, but it does contain some typical features. Careful examination of UTP will lead to an understanding of the social structures which have helped to shape employment preparation as a field, and this can be achieved through the three processes of “describing, understand, and explaining” (p.39). The notion of the singularity suggests that analysis of the features of a particular setting leads to a partial understanding of the issues of a wider field.

For a case to work as a singularity, some care has to be taken to ensure that it is representative, meaning that “it has been constructed within an initial sociological theory” (Hamel et al., 1993, p.36). The selection of the research setting is led by the fit with the researcher’s theoretical concerns and with the extent to which it is apparent to readers of the research why that case was selected, often referred to as relatability. “The degree of detail in the description of the case study thus serves to ensure that the representativeness of the case under investigation has been defined in a manner that is clearly apparent” (p.36). I like this argument, and the emphasis on findings being transferable to other contexts by the reader rather than generalisable by the writer. Examining the singularity leads not to “open generalisations,” but to “closed generalisations” (Bassegy, 1981), where the audience of the research can select which aspects of the case study help to explain particular aspects of their own experience. This is not to suggest that theoretically oriented generalisation is not possible, but rather that studying more than one case does not inherently increase the utility or strength of the argument.

In this approach to case studies it is important that the report should be detailed enough for readers to compare the research setting and their own experience in an active and creative way, and learn from that comparison. In some ways, the actual case is used more in an instrumental than an intrinsic manner (Stake, 1994) to illustrate and add depth to an argument, and to support the learning of the reader. The approach is consistent with the argument that educational researchers should “eschew the pursuit of generalisations, . . . and instead should actively encourage the descriptive and evaluative study of single pedagogic events” (Bassey, 1981, p.86). The practices of UTP educators become examples for readers of the research to consider in their own practice.

When I was looking for a setting for my research there were a number of reasons to choose Union Training Project as a case study. My initial intent was to examine curriculum in community education, so I wanted to find a community based provider, but two community education programs I approached refused me entry. The first did so because a change of educational personnel within a larger institution had left the staff feeling overwhelmed. In the second case the person in charge of the setting was conducting research there and did not feel comfortable with another researcher on the premises. These two refusals took from November 1997 to March 1998. Finally, a friend of a friend heard about my problem and came forward with the suggestion to approach Union Training Project and to examine employment preparation as a form of adult education. When I examined UTP I discovered several good arguments for setting my study within the organisation.

Following from the proposal that cases should be chosen for theoretical reasons, it made sense to me that the case should demonstrate a tension around the curriculum, with many different interests influencing its development. UTP certainly fits with this criterion as a labour union sponsored employment preparation program since, as mentioned above and explored in more depth in chapter 3, the aims of current labour market training policies and those of the labour movement are strongly contradictory. A second source of interest is that UTP is a relatively large organisation within the employment preparation field, with around 40 people working in instruction and administration, promising a rich and complex set of perspectives. Finally, I believe that UTP has a high level of relatability, both within employment preparation and in adult education in general. The investment of many millions of dollars in this form of education over the last 15 years has led to the creation of many jobs for educators in these programs. Within the field the reputation of UTP is very strong, and the programs are seen as good examples of community based training. This suggests that not only is the work of UTP similar to that conducted by many other adult educators, but is considered in a positive light. UTP offered a study that was both representative and particularly likely to lead to insights into my research interests.

In summary, my approach to case studies is that they can provide a great deal of understanding about a particular situation, and can address broader issues as long as two central principles are borne in mind. The first is that application of the arguments of the case study to other settings is dependent upon the reader of

the research and not the writer. The second principle is that the case must fit with the questions to be addressed, and do so in a justifiable manner. The role of the writer is to ensure that the case study report is of significant quality to allow potential application to other settings, and to make it clear why there would be applicability. Ensuring the quality is present is a complex task, one of the most significant components of which is validity.

### Considering Validity

Interpretive researchers aspire to a well justified perspective and a tight analysis, and frameworks for developing these qualities have been offered by many writers. What is clear from the number and variety of perspectives on interpretive validity is that there is no single set of actions, or considerations to be taken into account ensuring research is valid. In the literature there is even some disagreement on the fundamental nature of validity, whether it should be considered as an inherent part of research which has to be protected against threats (cf. Maxwell, 1992), or a quality that must be sought actively (cf. Lincoln, 1995). There is a view that “seeking some unitary meaning for validity in qualitative research is a mistake” (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, p. 330). I agree with the third perspective, and believe validity to be situational, a product of the rigour of the researcher and the demands of the setting. To some extent it is unhelpful to enter into research with an inflexible expectation of a certain degree of validity being always obtainable.

Nonetheless, it is important for interpretative researchers to outline their own standards of quality for any research endeavour. These should take into account both internal validity, the extent to which the research setting is fairly represented, and external validity, the extent to which the project supports readers in their attempts to apply the insights of the research to their own situation. These two forms of validity are often considered separately, though the criteria for ensuring each type are essentially identical. My approach is to combine the two, and to look for criteria supporting accuracy in description and analysis as well as creating opportunities for other adult educators to generate questions about their own practices. What matters is the potential for knowledge transfer the case study manifests in the hands of the reader. "People find in case reports certain insights into the human condition, even while they are well aware of the atypicality of the case" (Stake, 1994, p. 241).

There are two broad areas to be addressed in order to ensure that atypical cases lead to wider insights. The first of these is data handling and conceptual development, which in the present study are based upon the values of critical ethnography. This approach attempts to link the macro of social structure with the micro of lived experience, and lays claim to an explicitly political research agenda (Anderson, 1989). There are five themes which appear in the content of critical ethnography: knowledge, values, society, culture, and history (Quantz, 1992). The critical researcher strives to address these five themes through a "reciprocal relationship between data and theory. Data must be allowed to generate

propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured” (Lather, 1991, p. 62). Critical ethnography features several forms of validity which are valuable to this study. Bringing together a number of views (Anderson, 1989; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1991; Quantz, 1992), critical ethnography should produce accounts attempting to be transparent about their own creation. Throughout this study I have tried to respect this principle by showing how I reached my conclusions and what their limitations are.

The second area to be addressed concerns relationships with participants in the research, and the ways in which their contributions can be recognised and valued. These relationships are the keystone of interpretive research, and a number of writers have suggested means of respecting the people involved (Foster, 1994; LeCompte et al., 1993; Lincoln, 1995). One of the best outlines of emerging criteria is that offered by Lincoln (1995), who suggests that there are eight means of judging quality in interpretive work, and that each will be more or less applicable to a particular research project. For the present study, I believe that there are four which are useful to consider. The first of these is positionality, within which I include the issue of voice. This criterion recognises that texts are partial and always reflect the standpoint of the researcher. The next criterion is the recognition of the community as arbiter of quality, which means that research participant’s views on the project should be incorporated. Thirdly, reciprocity refers to the extent to which researchers try to give something back to research participants. The final criterion



is sacredness, which emerges from “a profound concern for human dignity, justice, and interpersonal respect” (Lincoln, 1995, p. 284).

After some reflection, I decided that the best way to recognise the validity criteria I have outlined was to develop principles to guide my actions and analysis during this research. These four principles were care, checking, clarity, and complexity.

The principle of care means that I not only protected the participants view of the research and their involvement in it, but also that I was careful about their representation. A research report always speaks to some extent about and for the participants, and this responsibility was always on my mind. Positionality and voice are complex and important issues which played an important role in the design of the research. For example, it was important to me that this project was conducted on a peer level, rather than researching a subaltern group. The participants in employment preparation are given little choice about attending the programs, and the surveillance laden atmosphere of these programs would have made it difficult to establish mutual relationships with program participants while also working with the institution. Conducting this research with other adult educators addresses this concern, as well as allowing me to focus more closely upon the curriculum.

Checking was another important guideline. Each time I reached an insight I attempted to check it, either through triangulation of data already gathered or through direct questioning. In addition, the ongoing analysis was checked by my research supervisor and, less frequently, by my committee for transparency and

justification. A final report on the case was checked by UTP administrators, and their suggestions were incorporated. The interpretive approach to research, and particularly the illustrative use of the case in the present study, made it both easy and logical to make changes during the creation and analysis of data. This would not have been true to the same extent if the research had been a formal test of propositions.

I have attempted to respect the principle of clarity in this research. I do not mean that I tried to reduce experiences and to make them more simple, but that I wanted to make my arguments and analysis clear. It is hard for me to judge how well I have achieved this principle in my own work, especially when the ideas have been so complicated and so contestable. Nonetheless, to ignore this ideal would undermine my claims about meaningful checking by participants and the potential for reliability.

Complexity was my final principle. In essence, this was a reminder that if things seemed simple I was probably missing the point. Social relations are inevitably complex, multi-layered, and multifaceted, and there are few occasions where things are as clear as the researcher would like. Research is partial, and the creation of categories for analytical purposes does require some things to be left out and others signalled rather than fully developed. Recognising complexity means acknowledging the dynamic nature of the situation studied and the inherently incomplete nature of the account.

In this section I have discussed the ways in which I have brought validity to this research project. Based on the notion of validity as a contextual quality reflecting strong justification and tight judgement I have suggested the requirement can be fulfilled through the four principles of care, checking, clarity, and complexity. By adhering to these principles, I hope that the project demonstrates a strong framework of validity, and the analysis can be seen to represent in a trustworthy manner both the theoretical and the everyday concerns it was designed to address.

### Method

This section describes, in some detail, the steps I took to gather and analyse data, though the process was not as linear as this description suggests. Throughout the research period, from March 1998 to the early summer of 1999, there was constant reorientation and reorganisation of the data. Ideas would emerge, demanding follow up and clarification, while others faded into irrelevance.

#### Research question.

The study has a single overarching problem:

- What influences the selection and delivery of knowledge in UTP adult education programs?

#### Anonymity and consent.

To ensure anonymity for the research setting, it has been given the pseudonym Union Training Project (UTP). The names of cities, people, and the

educational programs have been similarly disguised. The two funding agencies, Human Resource Development Canada and the Ministry for Advanced Education, Training, and Technology have been identified correctly. All block quotes were checked by the research participants for accuracy and lack of identifying characteristics. Where only one person in a particular category is quoted, the identifying tag accompanying the quote has deliberately been left vague.

Each person interviewed completed a standard UBC informed consent form, which I have on file. They were able to review and change their comments, or withdraw them, when they saw the transcribed block quotes. The letter accompanying the transcription reminded participants that their words would become public. The sections of the transcription I did not quote were not checked by participants, were not seen by anybody other than myself, and were destroyed when the final reports were complete.

My observations in the classroom were conducted with informal consent. The instructor would invite me to explain my project and answer questions, and ask the participants if anybody had any concerns about me being there. Since the agency, the geographical location and the program were not identified, I judged that this would fall into the category of anonymous group observation. It would be naïve to consider the lack of objections to be informed consent on the side of participants, but my main interest was the activities of the instructor rather than the language or actions of the learners. This report mentions participants only to illustrate findings about staff of UTP.

### Entry to the setting.

After hearing about UTP I arranged a meeting with John Maclean and Hugh MacDermott (pseudonyms), the founders of the project, in mid-March 1998. I wanted to explain the project and get an idea of the process for obtaining entry to the setting. The following extract from my fieldnotes captures some of the atmosphere of the meeting. Note that according to UBC ethical guidelines my first approach had to be through a letter explaining the purpose and process of the project.

I gave John a copy of my introductory letter, and explained that they should read it before we talked. They did not appear to be surprised or disconcerted by this, and Hugh photocopied the letter twice, once for him and once for me. They then sat and read silently. When they reached the passage on "working within and against the state" Hugh laughed out loud. John said "there is a God". Hugh explained that this was exactly their own concern about their work. John talked for about 15 minutes about the corporate agenda, segueing into a project they were planning for unemployed people over 45 years old. Throughout the meeting John came and went a great deal. I estimate that he was present around 40% of the time. Hugh was there 90% of the time. . . . At the end of the meeting Hugh asked what the next step was. I explained that they should think about whether they wanted to have a staff meeting or just decide to go ahead. I made my preference for a staff meeting fairly clear. Hugh and John also appeared to feel that my research would help them to evaluate their program. I said that I would be happy to go along with a parallel project, but that I felt it was important to involve staff from the beginning. Even in the best run organisation, I suggested, people get a little worried about having a researcher around. When I left Hugh shook my hand and promised to be in touch in the near future. (fieldnotes)

By the end of March I received a fax from UTP authorising my research and setting out the schedule to which I had to adhere, negotiated with Hugh and John.

We understand that your activities would commence in mid-April and complete prior to the end of August. You anticipate a total of 20 contact

days over that period which could involve up to 2-3 hours of “staff contact” time per contact day.

One of their main concerns was that the project was too busy to devote a great deal of time to my research. In the end, I had far more contact time than anticipated, but it was arranged directly with individual instructors to fit into their teaching schedule. Staff were uniformly interested, helpful, and friendly. I spent some time with participants at cigarette breaks and similar times, and they treated me well despite not having been consulted to any great degree about my presence.

#### Data generation.

Data were generated through the examination of documents, interviews, and observation. Documents provided the policy background, some of the history, and the specifics of program proposals. Interviews were conducted with selected members of the staff of the Centre. The administrative staff, including the founders, co-ordinators, and government project officers, were formally interviewed once, and there were usually several subsequent informal discussions. The formal interview was based on a schedule, and was taped and transcribed. The instructors who chose to be involved in the research were interviewed several times, both formally and informally. Usually there would be a formal interview and then a number of ongoing informal conversations captured in fieldnotes.

The initial interview schedule concentrated on the general background of the individual, and then asked about a number of curricular issues. I used observations both to create description and also to generate issues I wished to follow up.

Observations took place in public areas of the building, in meetings of staff, and in educational settings. I was always careful to explain who I was and that asking me to leave would have no consequences for individuals.

### Data analysis.

Data analysis took place in several stages. The first was to examine it using the framework of categories offered by Bernstein, creating accruals of data around areas such as “content” and “classification of students.” To some extent Bernstein’s framework did affect the way I collected data and organised it in my records, and this is one of the strongest arguments for not considering this study a classic ethnography. I entered the setting with a theoretical perspective in mind, but it should be noted that Bernstein’s framework is not prescriptive, and does not suggest things should be a particular way. The main argument against Bernstein’s framework would have been that the situation at UTP did not fit with the analytical tool in some way, and I did struggle with the structuralist nature of his work as analysis proceeded. Nonetheless, I believe that the value of the analysis the framework made possible does justify the risk of theoretical imposition.

One means of mitigating the effect of entering the setting with such a strong perspective was to examine the data collected in Bernstein’s categories for themes that ran across them, such as “the good employee.” Bernstein told me where to look for features of the curriculum, but the thematic analysis arranged and made sense of what I found. For example, I realised that the rules of behaviour got stronger the closer learners became to work experience because Bernstein suggested I look for

behavioural rules, but I had to combine this insight with others in order to realise how strong was the influence of workplace norms. The four themes in chapters 5 to 8 are therefore developed from Bernstein's theoretical work, but not directly derived from his framework. They are based instead upon the confluence of data emerging from notes, transcripts, and reflection. Though framed by more abstract and theoretical discussions, these empirical chapters are the heart of the concrete analysis of UTP curriculum.

The final stage was to pull the threads back together for the overview presented in chapter 9. While Bernstein provides a useful way to frame data collection, his work is weaker when it comes to understanding the influences ensuring curriculum takes a particular form. Bourdieu's theories of capital transfer work well with Bernstein's approach, and allow the factors shaping the educational form to be considered. The thematic findings are interesting in themselves, but chapter 9 helps to place them in a broader context once more.

I used NUD\*IST qualitative software (QSR, 1997) to handle the significant amount of text I gathered through the creation of a hierarchical database. The database began with nodes on classification, instructional discourse, regulatory discourse, and organisation, and grew as the research proceeded and other themes emerged. I have some experience with this software package, and believe that it helps to organise a large quantity of data. It also makes it a great deal easier to check for triangulation of sources, since all the information on one theme can easily be examined at once.



However, use of such a package does require some familiarity with its protocols to move beyond the merely mechanical, and there is always the possibility that the tool can lead the analysis, shaping both the process and the conclusions. On this point I agree with Buston (1997), who suggests that while it would be naive to conclude that method of analysis has no effect the software clearly does not perform the analysis for the researcher. Buston suggests that “packages such as NUD\*IST should be seen for what they are— very useful, but powerless without a human brain leading them” (par. 13.5). Their utility is in freeing the researcher from the substantial clerical work of manually organising text, and this is a great benefit to the single researcher with limited resources. I discovered that while NUD\*IST helped with the relatively mechanical task of organising data within Bernstein’s categories, it was less helpful in the more subtle development of overarching or linking themes.

As topics emerged from the data they were checked repeatedly for triangulation. The coarsest example of this is tallying how many respondents made reference to a particular theme. On a more refined level, it was possible to trace a theme through documentary evidence, interview data, and observation. For example, the social mission of UTP emerges in program proposals, is mentioned by many interviewees, and is put into action in observable events within the programs. This suggests that social mission is important to the organisation and broadly recognised as a feature of working there. I looked for a substantial accrual of data

around a theme before I considered it valid, and at that point I would ask people at UTP for their opinion. Most themes were then confirmed in interviews.

Interpretive researchers are almost always faced with the question of when to stop, or how much data is enough. In my case, I made that judgement on the basis of convergence. When fresh data consistently reflected the issues and themes I had already identified, I began to feel that I had a reasonable grasp of the setting, and could justify my analysis. By this time I had talked to all the people involved in the programs I wanted to explore. Convergence started to emerge fairly early in the research process, both because my approach emphasised particular aspects of the curriculum, and because I was working within a relatively tight organisational culture.

#### Return to the community.

I tried to reciprocate for the time the educators spent with me. At first I hoped for some formal participation in the research, but as the weeks passed it became clear that they had no time for this. I ended up doing what I could, which involved occasionally being asked to teach in a computer lab or literacy class. I did a little of this, but always felt uncomfortable with it, and tried not to become too involved. While participation can be valuable, I always worry about blurring the lines, and being seen as an instructor. This reduces opportunity for observation, especially if there is tension between learners and staff. In the end, I usually helped out when asked by a participant, but joked my way out of long term instruction.

One instructor asked me to read out my fieldnotes after each classroom observation session. I offered to provide a summary, and explained that I often find that fieldnotes are sketchy and potentially offensive because of the short time available to write them. I gave summaries whenever I was in that class, presenting my findings in an undigested form. Sometimes this worked really well, and program participants grew interested and started discussing the ideas. Other times it fell rather flat because I was too theoretical and boring— a humbling experience for any researcher and educator.

The question of evaluating UTP did not arise during the later months of my fieldwork. I did, however, want to share my results with the organisation. I wrote a summary report containing the same arguments as this study and presented it to UTP administrators, who lost the first copy, but didn't let me know for several months. I offered to deliver the findings to the staff and lead a focus group, but this offer was declined due to pressures of time and the significant delay between research completion and the report being ready. One administrator commented to me that while the report was an accurate picture of what had been happening a year before, it was still like reading about another organisation.

### Chapter Review

In this chapter I have laid out and contextualises the question this research project addresses, and discussed the means by which I addressed it. Curriculum studies in adult education, as I have discussed, are unusual and somewhat complex to theorise. Each educational setting is quite different, unlike initial schooling

where there are structural features found almost everywhere in the world. In this chapter I have described how I addressed the complexities in order to create a perspective on one adult education setting. In the following chapter I begin to describe the context of UTP and show why it was such a fascinating setting for this research.

## **Chapter 2: Overview Of Union Training Project**

Union Training Project is an adult education organisation setting out to do something different with the resources associated with employment preparation programs. Rather than simply falling into the standard pattern of employment preparation provision, they have committed themselves to a different philosophy recognising the community, labour, and individual implications and potentials of the educational programs. Their approach uses labour market training as a means to achieve a number of ends, including moving unemployed people into well paid and secure jobs, building coalitions between labour and employers, and demonstrating the value of unions in a difficult period in their history. They want their programs to lead to real jobs in order to allow participants to contribute to society, their families and themselves. UTP try to use employment preparation for community and labour education as much as workforce development, and in doing so carry forward some of the most important traditional values of unionism. For UTP, labour market training represents a means to work strategically towards the objectives it sees as essential to the welfare of workers and the labour movement. The aim of this chapter is to describe UTP from the inside, transmitting a sense of how the organisation views itself.

When the case study was conducted UTP had 16 full time staff, and another thirty part time and contract. The staff were evenly split between men and women, though the founders are both male and walking through the office brings home how many of the administrative staff are female. All the staff I met were white, except

for one young female clerk. English was the only language I ever heard, though the location of the project is a city of high ethnic diversity. The majority of employees were in the second half of their working life, and I found out during the research that several were over retirement age. Dress was office casual, with few men wearing ties, but almost all wearing dress shirts. Women tended to wear simple clothing, and several female instructors frequently wore jeans. The overall ambience was one I found comfortable.

The training project is a division of a union local serving workers in the retail trades, with most of approximately 2500 members employed by major grocery chains in specialised food preparation roles such as sausage making. However, only a small minority of the 1000 people passing through the project each year are members of the union. The provision for members is limited by funding and geography to little more than evening courses in computer skills and the free provision of counselling and substance abuse services. UTP hopes to expand its provision to members in the future, to a large extent by developing computer based distance education courses. Presently, the vast majority of the training at UTP is aimed at unemployed people. The project holds several contracts from provincial and federal governments for various forms of employment preparation program, each of which is modified to some extent to recognise the values of the union. Non-member programming is viewed as an opportunity to teach people about the role the labour movement can play in improving the life of the entire community. As self defined social democrats, the leaders of the organisation believe that unionism is

about more than bargaining for members, and involves responsibilities to wider society. Everything happening at UTP begins from that stance.

### The Social Mission

The social mission of UTP is centre of all they try to accomplish with their educational provision. A typical answer to my initial question of whom UTP serve was that they “service the unemployed and displaced worker.” This is true, but far from complete. For example, one further dimension of the project emerged when I was told that “our mandate is to get out there and do community outreach work, to do it within the philosophy of the union movement, to promote through example the good works that organised labour can do” (UTP administrator).

It is interesting to note that UTP do not refer to their provision as employment preparation or labour market training. Documents talk of “strong, well-focussed programs that direct the unemployed to meaningful employment,” and “federally funded project-based training.” The employment objective of the programs is merely an end, with the means clearly considered as “community training programs.” From this perspective the unemployed, the labour community, and the wider community are all served by the work of UTP.

Our approach to adult basic training whether it's at the membership level or in the community is I think a little bit philosophical but as a result of a kind of a social conscience that as a trade union we have some obligations that go beyond just looking after the membership on the bread and butter issues. That's a debate we've had internally within our own union, concluded that our role, if you will, in society goes beyond the bread and butter issues and this is one way of trying to fulfil that role. (union official)

John Maclean, one of the founders, told me about the philosophy he shares with co-founder Hugh MacDermott and the other staff members. He believes that unions can help people contribute to their community as well as improve their own situation.

. . . we get them in here, we talk about being productive in their own life. Productive in their own life as well as the community, as well as on the job. Our programs are structured that way. Feelings about community, being responsible within your community and being a trades person, to have quality and be a craftsman . . . the union job in training is to create a whole person who's active within their family, the community, and network with a skill which creates a feeling of contentment and long-lasting sustainability, and security comes from the confidence to know that you have a skill and can create wealth for your family and interact in the community, can be a better citizen. You can help your fellow person through our community projects here.

This social conscience underpins and shapes the work of the organisation.

Each program is seen as accountable to the participants and the wider community, a commitment reflected in the design of the education. Proposals refer to helping “clients reach their optimum capacity in the workforce and in their social environment.” As a concrete example the products of the courses, whether they are hot meals, sausage, or carpentry projects, are redistributed to the community at low or no cost. The cooking programs have to run a kitchen in order to give the participants the experience of being a working cook. These kitchens are usually in a school, and the meals produced are sold, at a cost covering only ingredients, between 5 and 7 p.m. When I attended these meals, many older residents came from the area around the school to pick up a well cooked three course dinner for \$4.50 or less. This kind of work benefits participants as much as local people.



People want to be contributing members of their community, they want to be able to give back. They want the stuff too, but we don't work because we want money, we work because, a part of it is because we need to work, that's the way our society works, but part of it is because there's a value, there's an intrinsic value to working. It has to do with giving back, putting, building our own self esteem, and if we say to people that it's good enough to reach for the bottom, how are we ever going to build a society that is focusing on community? You know, a society that cares about itself. (administrator)

In addition to a philosophical concern with community, the centre has often taken a more direct approach to support participants towards their goals.

One of the problems we, not particularly myself but the likes of Maclean and the counselling staff, they're very observant about people falling asleep maybe in class, what the problem was. To me they're just tired, to other people they're out partying, drinking, shooting drugs or whatever the night before. The majority of them it was because they were, they were hungry. Not so much tired, it was just basically hungry. And that's when Maclean come up with the idea, let's try feeding them, and that's made a tremendous difference in the class. (administrator)

There are many stories about individuals within UTP going out of their way to look after people even if their connection to the project was tenuous. A contract employee told me about one occasion.

We had a couple of people living in a van in the back of the building. A member of the staff noticed them living in the van. A young guy and his two daughters and Maclean brought the guy into the building, made sure that he had enough food. His impulse was not to tell him to get lost, his impulse was to bring the guy in, make sure that he had food, try to get him set up either an apprenticeship program or with a job, make sure that the appropriate social services were there to help and to, I think he was also trying to keep [away] the social services that would grab the kids for no reason because the father in fact was okay with the kids. He tried to keep them away. In short he didn't just step over a prone body on the streets, he stopped to help. I've seen him do that on a number of occasions, consistently. That in itself amazes me and the organisation follows suit. There is, that even sort of sets a standard for common humanity and compassion that I haven't seen in

many organisations, you know, many of the organisations that I've worked for since the early 70s. I find it absolutely refreshing.

The founders are quite straightforward about the way in which the social mission has to be maintained by occasional autocratic actions. This has become a more pressing problem as the project has grown in size and become looser.

So as we've grown, we've found we've had to become more autocratic in terms of imposing this philosophy on contract instructors, on new coordinators in training, that this is why we're here, this is what our goal is, and you better damn well make sure everything you do falls within these parameters or you're going to have to deal with us. And we do, follow up on that. It's one thing that we're pretty serious about. We're pretty easy going in a lot of ways, but if we find somebody coming off the rails on, in terms of our key reason for being, our whole philosophy, we haul them in, and we can be downright rude sometimes. "How many times do you have to be told why we're here? What is it you don't get about this operation?"

UTP is predicated on an enormously strong commitment to humanitarian ideals such as equity and community. However, despite the claim that they are working for social democracy, this orientation does not come through strongly either in general conversation about the aims of the organisation, or in the organisational structure itself. Instead, I became aware of a number of paternalistic ways of thinking about the participants, and a conviction that the job of UTP was to improve their lives. The common and individual good was defined by the project rather than being a matter for discussion among all parties in order to develop a consensus. For example, the emphasis on autocracy as a way to ensure that the organisation does not "come off the rails" contradicts the notion that the project works democratically in any real sense. Similarly, talk of creating a "whole person" raises the question of just what kinds of deficits program participants are currently

suffering from. UTP has a clear vision of a better world, one which does contain many of the elements of effective democracy yet lacks the central principle of participation. This does not necessarily negate UTP's ideals, but it does raise the issue of how many compromises have had to be accepted by the project in the process of applying their philosophy to a concrete educational program.

As I wrote this report I showed the block quotes I intended to use to the people I interviewed, and one of them asked me to reinforce two points that I had previously underplayed. The first is the extent to which the project emphasises the idea of teamwork, both among the staff and the participants. For example, staff and participant bowling tournaments are a standard element of the programs, and are very much looked forward to by all involved. The second point is to underscore the commitment Maclean brings to his work, and I was provided with a copy of the 1998 staff Christmas card. The message reads:

Being Christmas, it is a time to reflect on the past year. I feel very warm in my heart that we have all endeavoured to enhance the lives of those around us on a daily basis. I hope that they carry the message with them that all Canadians are equal and deserve the right to make a decent living and are allowed to voice their opinions freely.

This message summarises for me the ways in which UTP approaches the delivery of employment preparation programs. Their fundamental commitment is to serving the participants as well as possible, and as Maclean explained, the learners come first, the funders second, and the staff third. UTP are extremely concerned that they do more than shuffle people off welfare or EI and into minimum wage jobs, and believe strongly that work must be secure, well paid, safe, and dignified.

To this extent, the social mission of UTP is to resist the labour market segmentation implied by recent industrial restructuring. They do this by viewing workers in a holistic way and respecting the challenges and opportunities each worker faces as they move into new forms of employment.

### The History Of UTP

UTP has existed in its present form for only 3 years. The local's training provision started in the late 80s, when a new collective agreement signed with major retail stores provided the union with a training fund of 1 cent for every hour a union member worked. This amounted to a substantial income for the union, and there was discussion about how it could best be spent to benefit the members. Around that time John Maclean, one of the union's vice presidents, expressed an interest in educational issues. The president had just been involved in a training scheme with a primary resource industry and was keen to find out more about training, and to develop opportunities for union led education. He suggested to Maclean that he should go to the various levels of government and find out more about funding possibilities, "and that kind of got things rolling and gave him a few pointers where to go. He did the initial research—'Hey, yeah, you can get some money by doing this, and this, and this'" (Union Official). The first community based program by the union aimed to recruit women into the more traditionally male retail trades such as sausagemaking, an objective that fit well with the union's commitment to workplace equity. "These people would be hired into nice

good solid union jobs, and this is how the union got interested in backing this kind of training” (UTP Administrator).

Maclean originally worked out of the union’s headquarters, with lack of space limiting the type and size of programs it was possible to deliver. During a strike in the early 90s the union leased some extra space to act as a headquarters, and when the action was over the union decided to keep the offices as a training location. Setting up an independent training centre was a difficult decision for the union because even though it held several government contracts, they were short term with no guarantee of renewal. Sharing the new building with the union was a separate organisation focused on wellness training and literacy work, operated by Hugh MacDermott. Maclean had earlier been introduced to MacDermott by a Human Resource Development Canada Project Officer who managed contracts for both people. Working alongside each other they came to realise that they had a great deal in common, and in late 1995 MacDermott dissolved his own business and joined the union training project.

There have been highs and lows in the last few years. In the fall of 1995 it looked very much as if half the staff would have to be laid off. The provincial government went through a restructuring of the ministries dealing with the centre and some expected funding failed to come through. The founders were determined to survive this setback. “In November I found funding for two small projects, which helped some of the staff...so we ended up deciding whether we were going to lay the staff off and we didn’t” (Maclean). The agency decided to protect their staff rather

than lay them off at Christmas, and went into the red for \$46,000 they could ill afford. For several months staff were kept busy studying the labour market in order to develop better programs, which later proved to be useful research. The union also chose that April to put on the first annual awards dinner for participants, employers, and political supporters of the training project.

We wanted to say thanks, there was a number of motivations for an awards dinner. To say thanks, really and truly, but the other side of it is we brought in all the head honchos from HRCC in the province, we brought in all the people, the Premier came to that. So that helped to attract some funding for the workers . . . we took a chance. We rolled the dice. We could have closed the doors. (Maclean)

The contacts made and contracts attracted by that dinner turned the organisation around, and the year leading up to this study was a particularly strong period of program expansion. The type of provision delivered by the centre stabilised, with the majority of funding coming through repeat government contracts for successful employment preparation programs. The centre has tried "to remain honest," turning away funding that would conflict with its commitment to union ideals, or where they simply did not feel they could do a good job. The money borrowed to keep the staff on has been repaid, and the centre is self supporting. Maclean and MacDermott continue to run an operation which presently has between 35 and 45 employees including instructors, contract counsellors, administrative staff, and temporary employees.

The formal relationship of the training project to the union is relatively loose. It is run as a completely separate organisation, and though the union has loaned UTP bridging money in the past, there is a strong expectation that the project will

be self sufficient. Administrators describe the organisation as “not-for-profit,” a designation reflecting the project’s lack of non-profit (charitable) status. Only 10% of training is delivered to union members, though they get free access to the centre for computer training and counselling. However, there is still a high degree of attachment to the parent union, and Maclean continues to report to the president of the Local. Even though the formal structure of the organisation does not bear this out the employees of UTP see themselves as involved in the labour movement.

UTP started from the idea that training would be a beneficial area for the union to be involved in, both for the organisation and also for the wider project of fulfilling the social mission. From this point onwards, the organisation has tried to balance its mission with the demands of funders in a highly strategic way. For example, the invitation to the premier to attend the awards dinner in 1996 was an effective way to raise the profile and credibility of the union’s training endeavours, attracting new funding and preserving jobs within UTP. Even the beginning of the organisation, with the initial impulse to discover what funding was available, reflects an astute appreciation of the need to take the pragmatic into account alongside the commitment to furthering workplace equity.

### UTP programs

All of the programs provided to the community by UTP are state funded and designed to move unemployed people into either employment or further training.

Yes absolutely, every program has got to have an employment focus in it. You give upgrading of some kind, or you’re giving some kind of lifeskills training, but to what end? Where do they go next? How do

you ensure that they're going to carry on with their action plan? So, no, we've always tried to focus on skills training, where there was lots of employment opportunities available. (UTP administrator)

Each program is roughly the same size, with about 20 participants. The cost to funders is typically \$128,000. Of that money, \$12,000 goes on rent, and \$69,000 on shared services such as administration and counselling. The balance of \$47,000 has to cover the actual cost of the training, and shortfalls do occur. Most UTP programs with this kind of budget are six months long, meaning that the instructional costs for each of 20 participants must be around \$390 per month. Given that there are at least 120 contact hours per month, the program has a considerably tighter budget than a university or college.

The programs have been designed to feed into apprenticeable trades of various sorts. This includes not only the retail sector represented by the union, but aviation and mechanical trades as well. Every training program has on site classroom based sections as well as some industry based experience for participants, and the needs of employers are taken into account as the program is developed.

I think what we're trying to do here when we put together our employment training programs, we go out and we find out what skills are required by the end user, which is the person who pays, which is the employer. So we go out and we basically find out what skill sets these people need. Then we develop our training curriculum. (UTP administrator)

So that's what we do, we go out to the industry from as broad a perspective as we can cause even the simple trades might have four to five different avenues to it, and bring the people together and say this is what we would like to do, this is a general philosophy, how should we go about it, what should we include, who should be aimed at, what should be the criteria for getting into it, what's the absolute basic



minimum qualifications you need to start the trade? (UTP administrator)

The initial ideas can arise from industry, UTP, or the funders, but are developed and put in place by all three groups. The programs are constantly reviewed after they are implemented. "In some cases, programs have no market demand and are dropped, as was the electrical trades program."

We constantly re-evaluate what we do with the Cooking And Restaurant Skills program as well, how's it changing, how's the industry changing, that's what gets changed in the program. You can't just sort of sit back on your laurels and say "oh well aren't we doing a good job?" The reason we do a good job is because we do keep on top of that. (UTP administrator)

The programs are seen as partnerships between the funders, the union and the relevant sectors of industry.

We always go back to the industry and set up industry advisory committees, and that would be labour and management sitting down and funnily enough, despite what we read in the newspapers, certainly during negotiations and collective agreements there's very little difference between labour and management. They both need a trained labour force to the benefit of both and they co-operate very well. (UTP administrator)

Interestingly, potential or past participants are not involved in designing programs.

We have discussed this at various times, bringing people like that in, and except for that one occasion we've never done. Not for any particular reason against it. It's we've just not done it . . . But yeah, perhaps we should get out and bring unemployed people in cause they have a different perspective than we do. It's very nice when you're eating three square meals a day and going home to your nice warm house, drive your Cadillac home, to think things are a bit different than they are on the outside. (UTP administrator)

Their commitment to social ideals means that UTP constantly attempts to provide participants with more than a typical corporate training program.

There's a huge difference between the way we train, but there's similarities because at the bottom line is you've got to meet the corporate standards. But when they leave here they can also come back, as we have night school free courses. You can come in here and take free counselling and they can network with us for employment opportunities. (UTP administrator)

UTP's employment preparation programs aim to provide participants with a broad and effective preparation for work. They are carefully designed by industry advisory groups to ensure that they are sufficiently relevant and credible to act as a means to obtain entry to well paid and secure jobs. More support is offered than by other learnfare programs, with the emotional and psychological aspects of employment dealt with alongside the purely educational. UTP has structured its programs to resist the dehumanisation and segmentation of working life frequently underpinning employment preparation initiatives, most significantly by recognising that returning to work is difficult, and must be supported and made worthwhile.

UTP's programs fall into two broad design categories. The first is the sampler programs providing general exposure to a number of different and unrelated trades, and which have proven to be an innovative and effective way to introduce trades related employment to unemployed people. The programs are 16 weeks long, and during that time lifeskills, personal skills, computer literacy, basic skills upgrading, and periods of hands on experience are offered. A recent recruiting flyer lets the potential applicant know that the program is looking for people from 19 to 29 years of age who are on Employment Insurance or who have been in the last 3 years, and

the overall aim of the programs is to assist young workers to begin their trades career.

The second broad group is concerned with developing skills in a single trade, usually for older participants. The two most frequently run both concentrate on cooking, though they take a slightly different approach to it. The Cooking and Basic Skills program (CABS) combines cook theory and practice with extensive literacy upgrading, while the Cooking and Restaurant Skills program (CARS) deals with food service, billing, and restaurant management along with cooking. During my time at UTP most of my observations took place within a CABS program.

The innovative structure of CABS, dealing with employment skills and basic skills together, developed because of the difficulty of interesting people in a stand alone literacy program.

We mounted a literacy program and it didn't work so then we had come across, I had read something, that's how it happened. In the States they decided to deal with literacy by bringing it with a direct trade attachment so people could see a direct employment skill as a result and incorporate the literacy stuff. The advantage to that was not only that you get people into the program because they feel they're going to get a job at the end but also in teaching them the skills. It was more the teaching method, it was an integrated teaching method so with the cook literacy we were able to, for example, use the cookbook instead of an English text book. We used a cookbook and people inadvertently learned. The first program was amazing. We had people that we tested between grades 4 and 8. I don't think we had anybody higher than that and 85% achieved a GED, which is a grade 12 equivalency, within a four month period. (government project officer)

The success of the CABS programs led to industry consultation, and the eventual development of the CARS programs.

Those particular cooking programs were very successful and because of our tourism industry and hospitality industry started to grow and grow and there was more and more jobs in cooking and what-have-you so when they came back and said “okay, we want you to develop a bigger program.” People here have a lot of contacts in the hospitality industry so they went to the hospitality industry and said “okay, if we're running a program, you as employers, what do you want to see involved in the program?” So they had this great combination of an understanding of both sides and that's how this particular program was developed. (UTP administrator)

Far from being questioned, the involvement of employers in a union run initiative is seen as a strength. The cooking programs are able to serve the needs of several groups within one educational form. They are clearly based in the needs of the industry, a strategy benefiting both UTP, as it justifies their requests for funding, and participants, who can have some confidence in the training they are taking. The programs are designed to work with people who require practice in the areas of literacy and numeracy if they are to be able to fulfil the demands of apprenticeship, meaning that basic skills can be offered in an arena with significant payoffs for students. They truly offer diligent participants an opportunity to go from unemployment to respectful and desirable employment.

### Organisational Structure

The organisational structure of the project changes constantly in response to available funding and evolving priorities, and UTP currently has three premises, a central one containing administration and two sublet single classroom units. Each of these sites is within a medium sized town on the outskirts of a large city, though the type of community is different in each case. Having the satellite classrooms

complicates the work of UTP considerably, since each must deal with a different HRDC office and a different MAETT project officer. At the time of the case study, it appeared that one satellite would be shut down, since the difficulty of recruiting participants outweighed the advantages of local provision. Despite the regular changes there is a constant organisational model in place with three distinct layers of employees in addition to an administrative staff of bookkeepers and secretarial workers.

The top layer consists of the two people who have been working with the project from crystallisation into its present form in 1995, John Maclean and Hugh MacDermott. Of the two men, Maclean is the prophet, who passionately believes in the training centre and what it can do. He speaks at length on the topic with little provocation, and has the charisma to dominate meetings with his concerns. MacDermott is committed in a quieter way, but is the rock from which Maclean preaches. Together, they are an effective and solid team who have achieved a great deal in a short time. These men are not only the source of the program ideals, they also shape the whole organisation. Each of them admits freely that they behave in an autocratic manner at times, when they believe that it is necessary to protect the participants, and their ideals dominate the social mission and everyday practices of UTP.

I attended one of the frequent staff meetings early in my time at the centre in order to get a sense of the organisation. It started at 7:30 am. I asked somebody why it started so early, and was told that it was because Maclean was an early

riser. During the meeting Maclean spoke 80-90% of the time, for almost an hour and fifteen minutes. He started with some jokes about everybody who was late being fired, which raised some half hearted laughter, and moved on to review a number of policy level developments. The attendees were almost all co-ordinators and administrative staff, with only one instructor present. I came away both impressed and surprised by the amount of energy that Maclean had put into that meeting. I was told:

. . . sometimes he's capable of brilliance, absolute brilliance and I find him quite an amazing man to watch and work with, you know- he'll go and explain and say how this organisation fits with that organisation and these people work with that and how, you know, all of the stuff that draw the whole thing together. He draws the whole picture and doesn't miss a beat. Doesn't leave out even a small scrap of information and you know he's absolutely brilliant and I'm left with my mouth hanging open.

The combination of disparate personalities in a leadership team is not unusual for contracting organisations. One government worker reflected on the characteristics of successful project administrators.

Whenever I talk to them there's a number of them that have husband and wife teams, and so on, and that's sort of how it works. And others that have the bookkeeper person and outgoing person. And those are always the most successful projects because you need that practical balance. (government project officer)

Beneath Maclean and MacDermott, the second layer is the program co-ordinators, who take care of the day to day administration of the educational provision. There are five co-ordinators, most of whom report to Maclean. One co-ordinator described the job to me, explaining that the

. . . co-ordinator actually keeps it all together. Okay? I do everything from recruitment, intake, actually taking people on, and the recruitment includes all kinds of testing. We do CAAT [Canadian Adult Achievement Test] testing here which is to make sure that the people we bring into this program are the level where we're not going to set them up for failure in other words. . . . [in recruiting participants] we're looking not only for industry knowledge or an understanding of the industry that they're going into [but also] at personalities. It's not just about what you've got on paper. It's a lot of things . . . A lot of it's paper work, literally paper work. We do all our case management here so when I'm doing recruitment and intake that also involves case management. Dealing with HRDC and MOEST [provincial funders] people on the liaison back and forth. Working on ideas for new programs . . .

The co-ordinators are the most important source of support for participants going through the programs. Participants move through instructional components and work with different instructors, so co-ordinators are the only people participants know consistently from the intake interview until they complete the program. Co-ordinators take their job seriously, and see themselves as mentors for the participants, particularly if they have been on social assistance themselves. The job is demanding, and requires co-ordinators to draw from all of their previous experience. "What I found though is I've been able to pull together my business knowledge, my placement knowledge, all of that pulled together to be where I am and have a real understanding of what I do." The variety of backgrounds the co-ordinators bring to their work is seen as a real asset.

Some co-ordinators will teach classes from time to time to keep their hand in, and instructors value the support co-ordinators provide when tricky issues arise or changes have to be made to a program. "The co-ordinators will sit down and talk it through as long as you want to talk it" (instructor). Because the responsibility for

program changes lies largely with the co-ordinators their knowledge of the programs has to be detailed and current.

The third layer of program staff is the contract workers, which includes the program delivery staff. Counsellors work for another organisation which assigns them to UTP, and will not be considered in great depth because their contact time with participants is at most five days out of six months. In addition, their status as contractors means that they spend little of their time working for UTP, and interviews suggest that they do not see themselves as part of the UTP structure. Instructors, however, are individual employees of the centre. Having instructors on short term contracts allows the organisation to create programs with specialised topic areas, and to move quickly when one area of employment looks promising for the participants. "I think one of the reasons for success in the programs is that we're able to bring those with the particular skills in the area of the program that we're doing into the project" (administrator). Administrators would like to have permanent instructors, but cannot see how it would be practical. "If anybody can find a solution to the problem of having broad based skills for all the programs we are doing, I would love to have somebody working there permanently but it's not going to happen" (union official). Whereas co-ordinators' roles are seen as broadly based, instructors are specialised staff. This division is important to the staff, and will arise again later in this discussion.

One co-ordinator told me at some length about the expectations UTP has for an instructor, in this case for the Cooking and Basic Skills program.



The basic skills instructor is with the students for the first ten weeks and he or she has to, they bring in their own curriculum. We give them an idea of what has to be done, we give them the outline and they provide the curriculum, they set up how they're are going to teach it, what they feel would get across in their own style. I have regular meetings with my instructors to know what's going on, not only with what they're doing in the class but what the students are reacting to, what needs to be looked after. So what I'm looking for with an instructor is somebody who can fit those parameters and yet still personality-wise, that's really important too, for me anyway, getting somebody in the classroom that can relate to the particular group they're dealing with. If they don't relate to the group it doesn't work. And so they've got a big job in there. They're also dealing with some of the stuff I deal with so they've got to be multifaceted, as well as just being an instructor in that particular subject, they've got to be able to recognise problems that are going on with the students, be able to tell me about them so we can intervene.

Though the outlines and objectives of the programs are set at the administrative level, instructors have the ability to control the immediate educational process. Co-ordinators must be consulted for significant changes in content, but "as far as the tempo of the classroom and how the material is presented, you do that on the fly and it depends on who's in the class" (instructor). Trades instructors often draw upon their work experience to select their material, and one explained to me: "say my area of expertise is in heavy duty equipment and engine parts, and so the curriculum is based on that and I know what industry wants from that aspect" (instructor).

The role of instructors is central to the programs. They have responsibility for the details of classroom process, and the retention of students is dependent upon their work to a large degree. Their terms of employment and working conditions are far less stable than those of other agency employees, and yet they do show a strong

commitment to the centre. It is ironic that the people carrying out the core business of the organisation have the least invested in them by the project.

The three levels of the organisation in UTP have significantly different roles and expectations placed upon them. The political and philosophical drive for the project comes from the two founders and is reinforced by the long term co-ordinators. The short term employees, such as instructors, have little opportunity to shape the organisational vision, and are basically required to accept the present structure. This way of arranging the operation of the centre has several advantages for UTP. It allows the project to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of employers and state funders. Contract instructors can be tested for fit before they are offered long term co-ordination roles. Perhaps most significantly, the founders can use the hierarchy to act autocratically when necessary to ensure adherence to the social mission of the union.

Several staff members with whom I talked recognised that the differentiated and autocratic organisation was a two edged sword. While they acknowledged the courage and commitment of Maclean and MacDermott, they felt that that the degree of control the founders exercised left other staff in static positions with little chance to learn new skills. "It's certainly the case that we don't do staff education. It's the certainly the case, or staff development and I think it would probably be a good thing." Another employee was more specific:

My take is that there would be really nice stuff could be done with this group for professional development in terms of a couple things. One is 'what is adult education and how should this be done?' And the other

thing that I think could be done here is they need a management person in here to get their jobs sorted out.

The organisational form is well adapted to what the founders want to achieve. It has the flexibility of the post industrial workplace around a solid core of committed people necessary to further the project's complex political agenda. It is fascinating that the form so suited to their ends should also contradict those ends in some ways, as it is autocratic in order to further social democracy, and it uses short term workers to ensure that the programs lead to full time employment. The organisation is sufficiently multidimensional to escape easy analysis, but does seem to be well adapted to the social and political environment within which it operates.

### The Role Of State Funders

The ability of UTP to achieve and maintain credibility with the organisations that support its work is a critical factor for its continuation and success. The viability of any labour market training program ultimately relies on the state funders, and while there is talk of partnership, to a large extent the policies of the state funders, the amount of resources at their disposal, and the priorities for that funding dominate the work of UTP. Working with both provincial and federal funders is complex and often contradictory due to differences in philosophy and approach, and the concrete mechanisms for program design and sponsorship are also dissimilar.

UTP's first experience of government funding was with HRDC, which has historically worked by establishing a group of programs and then referring people to

the programs on an individual basis. For example, they might set up a program in community work with 20 seats to be filled, and then allocate those seats to 20 individuals who wanted to be community workers. The programs are set up and the seats paid for in advance of recruitment of participants, and the decision to establish a program is taken in consultation with community groups.

We let the community know that we want to do some kind of work with unemployed clients and we usually rely on the expertise of the focus group to say we've got all these kinds of people, we've identified that they need this, we know this group intimately and this is the type of intervention. So basically they would often bring their ideas to us. It comes from different sources, sometimes we go out and look for interventions on ideas that we've generated but all this develops quite a intricate pattern, relationship between the community and ourselves so it could come from a number of angles. But it's supposed to be derived by some identified need. (government project officer)

One of UTP's strengths is that the involvement of employer advisory groups makes their bids for program funding particularly credible. Even in an era of ever increasing caution about program sponsorship UTP continue to receive new opportunities to contract with different area offices of HRDC.

The provincial funders take a far more top down approach to selecting programs to fund. Ideas tend to come from the higher echelons of government rather than through community consultation, and there is tight control over spending. The allocation of training money is based on the type and format of program as much as on any assessment of where the need lies at a particular time.

We determine through a fairly rigorous process how much money should be allocated to each one of a number of envelopes, so if you're given say a \$10 million budget and you look at your demographics and you engage in community consultation and you say "well, how much money do we want to spend on programs that are longer than 12 weeks

in duration,” because these are the expensive programs you say “well, we want to spend 70% of our budget there, 25% on programs shorter than 12 weeks . . .” (government project officer)

Community organisations often prefer working with the federal rather than the provincial government because the province demands a number of highly detailed reports taking a great deal of time to compile. Provincial regulations are tighter, which may produce a situation where the rules override the needs of the learners, whereas the federal government is more distanced from community groups and requires less detailed reporting or adherence to a particular set of procedures. The constant name changes at provincial level have also been wearing for many. “They change the name so often the paper work changes every three months. They don't have a consistent flow of how they want things done. We have to administrate, train our staff, re-train our staff on an ongoing basis.”

But the bottom line to this, the province undercuts us by at least 30% if not higher, for the amount of money for the same project we do for HRCC and have successes. They undercut us but we have twice the work because we got all these transitional problems to deal with.

The perception that provincial contracts may end up costing money strongly polarises attitudes to the two funding sources at the administrative level. The provincial participants, coming from income assistance, have been out of work longer than EI participants and may need a longer time to get ready for the workplace. The funding does not recognise this, meaning that HRDC programs subsidise provincial programs to a small extent. Unsurprisingly, this type of resource issue can lead to concerns about how labour market training will work after control of the funding passes entirely to the province over the next few years.

For an organisation such as UTP the process of gaining approval, and funding, for a program is similar whether the money is provincial or federal. The first stage is a meeting with one of the project officers.

I start asking questions to see if you really understand what their issues are, what their needs are, and more importantly do you understand what you're going to be tackling in terms of integrating back into the workforce, and do you have a vehicle which will enable them to acquire new skills, or to use their old skills in a new way to be able to convince an employer to hire them in the labour market? . . . And I'm going, "okay let's put it on paper. Let's find out where the training needs to take place, what are the gaps in their backgrounds? And are they willing and able to engage in this process? And how long is it going to be? And how much money is it going to take?"  
(government project officer)

There is a set of clear expectations about what the organisation proposing the program is able to demonstrate.

We expect that the organisation coming in with the idea is bringing in a number of levels of expertise. First of all they understand the target population intimately. Secondly they can provide us with the instruction, they know where they can get the right type of instruction, the right type of facilities. And thirdly, hopefully and the union has been very good at this, they have the contacts within the employer community. (government project officer)

The project officers take a very close look at the programs they are considering for funding, including the details of the curriculum. The final proposal will include lesson plans, timetables, assessment instruments, instructor's manuals, and other support materials.

I take an extremely detailed look at it because I have a particular interest in that area and because the whole concept of teaching and learning is what makes it work or not work. So it's important that not only the instructional techniques meet the target group, but the content of the training meets the employment needs, so we do take quite a close look at that. (government project officer)

Once the format of the program is agreed, the bargaining begins.

And you negotiate on the basis of each component of it, and the components are the training outline, the time frames, the techniques, the facilities, the cost, the administration. (government project officer)

One broad observation about the funders is that the people I talked to in both layers of government were thoughtful and committed to making improvements to the systems in which they worked. They were very interested in the details of UTP programs and were concerned that they should be successful. Even in a time of fiscal restraint and government accountability the project officers use the relatively small amount of room for manoeuvre they possess to support the autonomy of UTP and the ability of the organisation to work towards their social mission. There are institutional spaces available for UTP to do something different under the rubric of labour market training, and their social philosophy does have explicit support from the people controlling the resources. The question to be addressed is how UTP uses this opportunity.

### Chapter Review

In this chapter I have presented a broad overview of Union Training Project and how they think about the work that they do. I have tried to present it as much as possible from the project's point of view, to give readers a flavour of how they have dealt with the issues arising when putting together such an organisation. UTP is unique in the extent to which they have attempted to turn employment

preparation into something richer and more in keeping with the needs and interests of the workers.

The picture is not so simple as this overview suggests, however. The curriculum delivered in the UTP classroom represents an accommodation of many sets of values, and there are limits on what can be done. State funders are involved in planning and reviewing the work of UTP on a detailed level, and their priorities inevitably influence the shape of the programs. Employer groups are heavily involved in deciding what should be taught at UTP, and the wider union movement also has a stake in the programs. In the next chapter I examine this social context more closely.



### **Chapter 3: Between Labour Market And Organised Labour**

UTP's claim to be doing something different with labour market training raised two questions for me. The first was what a "normal" employment preparation project would look like, and the second was how UTP represented an alternative model. Addressing these issues requires exploration of labour market training as a policy context, leading to appreciation of the philosophy and objectives of the funding, and awareness of the history of labour education. The role of this chapter is to describe the social context of UTP's educational programs, providing a backdrop to the detailed pedagogic analysis to follow.

Documentary analysis and reflection on my experience of UTP, including the topics described in chapter 2, led me to view the project as an organisation with a significant tension at its heart. This is a result of two powerful external systems bearing simultaneously upon the administrators and instructors. On one hand the training project must reflect the historical mission of the labour movement to further the interests of the working class. On the other, employment preparation as a form of provision requires the educational process to emphasise particular pro-employer philosophies emerging from neo-liberal economic models. The pull towards one or other of these sets of interests is an important factor shaping UTP's work, and I show how the project attempts to resolve the tension on a pragmatic level by adopting a specific interpretation of unionism. This interpretation is sufficiently individualistic and competency based to recognise the neo-liberal policy context, and contains enough humanism to demonstrate a commitment to workers. What it does

not do is tackle the complexities of the collective concerns of organised labour in the post-industrial economy, or recognise the irony of a trade union delivering an employment preparation program.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the political context of employment preparation, showing how the policy reflects a particular view of unemployed workers. I will then describe the policy applied in British Columbia, both at the federal and provincial levels, and provide an outline of the significance of these programs. Union education will be discussed, and I suggest it is changing over time, to a large extent due to the same political context shaping employment preparation. I end the chapter by showing how UTP operates within the tension between labour market and organised labour, and raise questions about the price paid for survival.

### Contemporary Views Of The Economy

Employment preparation programs have developed during an era when a number of particular beliefs about the nature of economies have become regarded as common sense, and the programs inevitably reflect the influence of these beliefs. They can be found in the literature of employers, governments, and latterly, educational institutions. These assertions are variations of a claim that Canada, and indeed the developed world, has now entered a post-industrial period, and the information age is upon us. The ability of organisations to handle vast amounts of knowledge efficiently is critical, and this has many implications for the labour force. If the economy is no longer based on large and stable manufacturing concerns, workers will have to get used to a contingent and temporary job market. Rather

than selling many years of their labour to a single buyer, it will be necessary to compete for short periods of work. There will be a split workforce, with many people selling unskilled labour for very small returns, and others renting specialist skills out for high returns. Knowledge will be a critical factor in attaining and retaining the work that is available (Osberg, Wien, & Grude, 1995).

At the same time as the claims about the post-industrial age gained currency, neo-liberal economic theory attained higher levels of credibility. Throughout this study I use the term neo-liberal to refer to a resurgent current of thought embracing the market as an ideal system of assigning value, and viewing anything that interferes with its untrammelled operation as inherently detrimental to the common good. In the formerly dominant political economy of corporate statism workers had been gaining economic and social ground in the years since the Second World War, but in the early 80s the tide turned against them. The idea of competitive individualism makes union organisation anathema to neo-liberals, and the associated denial of the utility of collective provision justified cuts in social spending. During these changes unemployment grew, and the dominant interpretation changed from the social scourge identified by Beveridge to an outcome of the deficits of the unemployed. Something had to be done to address these shortcomings, as they were seen to reduce national competitiveness, and an array of programs were put in place to move people from welfare and unemployment insurance back into productive work. Among these programs was employment preparation.

The economic perspective underpinning these programs is human capital theory, an approach to the labour market based on the notion that the experience and education accrued by individuals can be analysed using the same conceptual framework applied to economic capital. Human capital theory is attractive to neo-liberals because it provides a means to justify two of their philosophical principles (Farkas, 1996). Human capital theory is based on the notion that workers are self-determined value maximisers making rational decisions about their vocational pathways, supporting the idea that workers are the owners and managers of their own capital. The first principle this supports is a meritocratic view of society, where the best will rise to the top through effort. The second principle claims poverty and unemployment result from individual's failure to invest sufficiently in human capital or to manage it efficiently. Providing these individuals with extensive support not only rewards their failure but reduces the incentive for them to expend effort and improve the situation. Both of these principles are important ideological elements of a market centred society, and suggest that social order is not based upon differential interests, but uneven allocation of resources due to different levels of motivation and aptitude applied to maximising the individual's advantage.

In the less extreme version lying behind much Western policy making this view implies that unemployed people must be given the means to increase their store of human capital. Rather than require them to invest in themselves, as with conventional education, the state invests in unemployed people by funding programs to prepare them for work. On their webpage Human Resources

Development Canada (HRDC), the country's most significant funder of employment preparation programs, demonstrate their approach to human capital.

Human Resources Development Canada is a focal point for the Government of Canada's efforts to help Canadians develop skills and find jobs. The department offers a wide range of programs and services that improve the functioning of Canada's labour market to benefit workers, employers and communities. These are investments in the human capital of Canadians, enabling them to meet rising skill demands. (Government of Canada, 1998b, para. 1)

In addition to providing a context for human capital based approaches to unemployment, neo-liberalism has created pressure to reduce the size of the state, moving as much provision as possible from within the government to the private sector. In the case of employment preparation the clearest manifestation of this pressure is the increasing amount of provision delivered by contracted third parties rather than by the state. One side effect of creating an army of contracted employees has been to reduce middle class anxiety over the changing economy by providing well paid work for people who would previously have entered public administration (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). The reduced state sector has not come at the cost of the middle class voter.

Over the last few years this process has gone further still, with the funders no longer supporting whole programs for a set number of years. Instead, individual unemployed people are funded to attend particular programs, moving the responsibility for selecting the programs to offer from the state to the community groups, unions, and non-profits involved in delivery. The state no longer has to bear the risk that a funded program might fail— instead, contractors have to take a

chance and compete for learners. The mechanisms of the market have grown ever more pervasive, running through the construction of the unemployed, the program they will attend, the employment of instructors, and the funding of the organisation. The political background for learnfare programs is not based upon concerns about the human costs of unemployment, but the perception of unemployed people as lacking some vital skills necessary for success on an individual level. By failing to invest in their human capital they are letting down themselves, their families, and Canada. Not surprisingly, such a view affects the organisation of provision for unemployed people substantially.

### Work And Welfare

As neo-liberal ideas about the relative roles of market and state gained ground in the 1980s, the shape of welfare provision began to change. In the US, the 1988 Family Support Act linked education and welfare in an innovative manner, based on the “general consensus that welfare recipients are not well prepared to enter the workforce” (Imel, 1995, p.1). The Act provided for the establishment of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) in every state in order to address the perceived deficits in education and work experience. However, these objectives were rarely directly measured, and as late as 1995 the primary evaluation for JOBS programs was the number of participants (Imel, 1995), suggesting a central concern with quantity rather than quality. Given this policy framework, it makes sense that one of the central concerns of US programs has been retention of learners. Pauly and Martinson (1995) analyse JOBS programs and

list 11 “ground-breaking innovations in the collaborative roles of the adult education and welfare systems” (p.15). Out of these, six are concerned to some extent with maintaining a high level of attendance.

As well as employment preparation, JOBS also contains workfare programs. The principle of workfare is that recipients must perform some work to earn their public subsidy, based on a belief that welfare recipients are fundamentally lazy and embedded in a culture of passive dependency (Shragge, 1997). The proponents of workfare believe that by forcing recipients to do something in return for their subsistence they can inculcate the values of the competitive and multiskilled human resource unit. Viewed in terms originating in the charity work of Victorian England, individuals have moved from the ranks of the undeserving poor to those deserving of assistance. In essence, the government helps those who are willing to help themselves. This leads to two concerns about JOBS programs. The first is the punitive use of welfare benefits, with cheques reduced for days missed. Not only is this dehumanising, it is also an erosion of the principle of welfare as a safety net. The second concern is the use of education as an instrument to discipline the unemployed, something which many adult educators would feel to be problematic.

For the balance of this study I follow Swift (1995) and use the term “learnfare” to denote the current employment preparation programs as derived from neo-liberal discourse. The term learnfare highlights some important aspects of the way employment preparation programs have come to be used in Canada. Firstly, it is reminiscent of welfare, and reminds us that employment preparation provision is

woven into the fabric of the welfare state. In some ways the discourse of learnfare could only have emerged in the context of extended support for unemployed people, and contemporary concerns such as how to reduce the taxation burden allegedly associated with high numbers of people dependent upon public assistance. Secondly, it is a play upon the concept of workfare, and in many ways learnfare can be seen as a softer version of the same thinking. Instead of being coerced to work to receive public money, participants are coerced into some form of education to prove they deserve social support. Using the term learnfare positions current employment preparation programs at the boundary between education, welfare, and social control, and reflects the coercive and punitive features of the provision. I will continue to use employment preparation to indicate the general form of provision, and labour market training as the overarching field.

The Canadian approach to unemployed people has developed along similar lines to the US, though concrete provision is organised differently. The federal ministry of Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) deals with people who are receiving Employment Insurance benefits, while Social Assistance recipients are the concern of the provincial governments. The two levels of government bring different regulations and different amounts of money to these programs. In British Columbia, HRDC spends around \$155 million per year on training interventions for unemployed people, compared to about \$45 million from the provincial coffers, mainly through the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training, and Technology (MAETT). These amounts are based on figures provided and explained by



government employees, because it has proven to be extremely difficult to get precise amounts from the ministries. There is no aggregate accounting system which takes into account the various expenditures by local project officers.

Training policies reflect the belief that the longer a person has been out of work the more support they need to re-enter the labour market, and that the converse is also true. For example, to gain entry to many long term MAETT programs applicants must have received social assistance for at least nine months. One implication of this approach is that those keenest to re-enter the workforce after a lay off or redundancy receive the least encouragement in terms of educational opportunities. Similarly, there is an implicit assumption that people who have not been working for some time lose the skills and attitudes making them employable. Federal programs can be shorter because they catch people almost as soon as they become unemployed, before their human capital erodes.

One interesting effect of the post-industrial argument underlying learnfare is the short term focus of its educational function. One of the marks of the 1980s was the increasing interest corporations took in immediate profit (cf. Kincheloe, 1999), and this is reflected in the time period over which employment preparation programs are expected to operate. HRDC state that they are interested in money savings over the short term, by which they mean 12-36 months (Government of Canada, 1998a). While this fits with recent corporate practice, it is a remarkably short period over which to evaluate an educational program. Another aspect of short term thinking is the emphasis within learnfare upon teaching the skills to find and

obtain a job, something workers are expected to do many times during their career. This kind of assertion derives directly from notions of the post-industrial state, and the expectation that there will be a high turnover of competitive knowledge workers in such an economy. It is the responsibility of the individual to be prepared for the predicted lack of job security.

The division between employment insurance and social assistance claimants has created a two tier system within labour market training. EI provision is designed to help the regular worker who is temporarily unemployed, and is based on the right of workers to withdraw what they have paid in. SA provides support to those who have been out of work longer, and are living in more severe poverty. The basis of SA is a charitable desire to help those less fortunate to deal with their basic needs (cf. Fraser, 1989). For EI claimants employment preparation is an option, but for social assistance recipients it is all too often a means to move them off the welfare rolls. The gender, class, and ethnic diversity that play into this divided form of provision, and how it affects the work of UTP, will be discussed in chapter 7.

The bifurcated complex of provision, with its rules about who qualifies for which program and which government funds what, was simplified in the summer of 1999, when the responsibility and funds for these programs was devolved from the federal to the provincial level. This agreement is extremely significant. The amount of money involved from 1997 to 2002 is \$1.25 billion of federal funds for BC alone (Human Resource Development Canada, 1997), and the communiqué estimates that 69,000 people were served by the affected programs in 1997-98. The reorganisation

creates several new areas of responsibility for the provincial government, and allows for the transfer of relevant staff from federal to provincial employment. Moving responsibility to the provinces is justified on the basis that education is a provincial matter, enshrining the concept that the most useful social policy response to unemployment is training. This emphasis appears to overlook the possibility that the basis of unemployment is more than a skills mismatch, and involves corporate and state decision making. While increased local control may be beneficial, there is danger of losing sight of unemployment as a national economic issue. The convergence of the two funding sources may also affect the gender and class divisions within labour market training. The same programs will be available, in theory, to all unemployed people in BC. It remains to be seen how these policies affect the relative status of participants, who will still receive living expenses from different funds, and continue to experience different degrees of pressure to re-train. At the time of the case study, it still mattered a great deal where the funding dollars came from.

### Federal And Provincial Provision In British Columbia

The federal government's first commitment to widespread learnfare provision, as opposed to earlier training interventions, came about in the mid 1980s with the establishment of Canadian Jobs Strategy funding by Employment and Immigration Canada. This money provided for the development of a number of relatively short term programs designed to provide job seekers with the kind of skills and practice that would help them to do well in interviews and to present a

good impression. Both social assistance recipients and people receiving Unemployment Insurance were welcome to attend these programs, which were set up in many provinces. By the early 1990s EIC's name had changed to Human Resource Development Canada, and priorities had also moved on. HRDC decided to take a more individualised approach to employment preparation. Rather than establishing programs, the funding would be allocated to individuals through the Human Resource Investment Fund. People could use these funds to purchase precisely the training they needed rather than being compelled to attend a full course.

In 1996 Unemployment Insurance went through a legislative change to become Employment Insurance, the name change designed to signal that the role of financial support was to help people to gain employment rather than give them a secure period of unemployment. Alongside the new title came tightened eligibility rules, including an intensity rule which reduced the rate of benefits for repeat claims (Richards, 1997). The emphasis was very much on EI as a stopgap measure to be relied upon as any other form of insurance. One government employee explained to me that it was rather like fire insurance, to be used only in disastrous circumstances, and only if the claimant could prove that they had not wielded the matches. HRDC are quite straightforward about their objectives, stating that "the Employment Benefits and Support Measures have two overriding goals: getting people back to work and producing savings to the Employment Insurance (EI)

account” (Government of Canada, 1998a, para. 6). Publicity documents are clear about the purpose of EI support:

About 935,000 Canadians are projected to receive Employment Insurance income benefits during the 1997-1998 fiscal year, providing them with needed income while they are looking for work or unemployed for reasons such as sickness or the birth or adoption of a child. (Government of Canada, 1998b, para. 4)

One assumption contained in this excerpt is that we are living in a time of rising skill demands requiring rising investment in human capital if Canadians are to be able to participate in the labour market. However, the role of EI is not to help everybody— the legitimate reasons for unemployment are fairly tight. Being made redundant or suffering in any other way from a falling employment rate is not countenanced by HRDC. To some extent these perspectives explain the whole approach taken by the agency, which emphasises the apparent deficit in skills suffered by individuals rather than the challenging employment situation. The neo-liberal argument that individuals are unemployed through their own deficiencies means it is reasonable to suggest that it should also be their responsibility to change the situation, and later in the document HRDC list one of their programs as a series of “skills loans and grants to provide individuals with financial support to gain the skills they need” (para. 21). State support for the individual to acquire human capital is becoming partial, a last resort rather than a right.

Summarising the development of HRDC programming since the mid-1980s, one of the clearest changes has been the stated and enacted purpose of employment preparation programs. From a universal service available to anybody who cared to

turn up it has become a targeted system designed to help unintentionally unemployed individuals to help themselves. Within these programs, some forms of knowledge, those related more directly to the needs of the labour market, are more credible than others. This is consistent with overarching aims of saving the EI account money and getting people working as soon as possible. Employment preparation has been transformed from the relatively generous and open initial provision to a narrowly individualistic attempt to reduce expenditure. The overall effect of this change, along with others, has been to generate a surplus in the EI payments account, with a claimed \$20 billion moved from the EI fund to General Revenue during 1997-98, effectively transforming EI payments from a contributory mutual insurance scheme to a tax (L'Hirondelle, 1999). What remains unclear is whether the reduced payouts were due to the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal system, or changes towards more restrictive eligibility rules.

The development of provincial employment preparation programs in BC has been a relatively recent phenomenon. During the 1980s British Columbia ministries concerned with the labour market were kept busy dealing with simmering labour union unrest. The assistance recipients who found support with employment at this time either went through rehabilitation services or federal provision, but the policy changed substantially in 1994. The previous year had seen the establishment of the Ministry of Skills, Training, and Labour, and one of the responsibilities of the new ministry was to take over all employment preparation programs (Klein, 1996). Within a few years the ministry was re-organised to include education, as the

Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. In early 1998 it changed once more, to MAETT. In contrast to previous reformations, the establishment of MAETT separates labour and education policy functions from those of training. Despite these frequent changes, which have caused some frustration to external agencies working with the ministry, the basic form of employment preparation programs remains similar to that established under the Skills BC initiative of 1994.

Presently employment preparation programs are managed by the Skills Development Division of MAETT. It is worth quoting their introductory paragraph:

The Skills Development Division helps government and communities determine and respond to priorities that enable British Columbians to adapt to a continuously changing labour market. Based on these priorities, the Skills Development Division facilitates access to skills development and employment opportunities for these British Columbians who:

- encounter barriers to workforce participation, including those in receipt of income assistance and people with disabilities; or
- face job loss due to structural change in the economy; or
- are employed and require skills upgrading to remain productive and take advantage of emerging opportunities in new and expanding industries (Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology, 1998, paras. 1 & 2)

One striking difference from federal documents is the acknowledgement of structural factors contributing to unemployment, possibly arising from BC's recent experience with reduced employment in fisheries and forestry. It is ironic that the province emphasises the involvement of communities in the decision making process given the comments in chapter 2 about the design of programs, and the far more top-down approach adopted in Victoria. Examination of the concrete provision suggests language differences mask a similarity of approach.

MAETT offers two main routes from income assistance to employment. The first is Youth Works, aimed at 19-24 year olds, and the second is Welfare to Work, for those from 25 to 59. The case study in this discussion is part of the latter provision, though the broad issues and concerns are similar for both. The ministry offers a definition of employability programs:

Employability programs are available to clients after completing seven months of independent job search and two months of assisted job search. It includes independent job search activities, training and employment assessment, job readiness, basic education, workplace-based training, and self-employment readiness. These programs are focused on addressing a participant's skill and experience gaps so that the client can secure and maintain employment. (Ministry of Education Skills and Training, 1997, p.80)

Even though the provincial government recognises the influence of changing structural conditions on unemployment, it is interesting that it describes the programs designed to assist unemployed people in deficit based language once more. As with federal documents, by talking of "gaps" in skill and experience such discourse suggests that unemployed workers lack employment because they have not fully prepared themselves for the post-industrial workplace. Unemployment would be less of a problem, this argument implies, if the unemployed took responsibility for their working lives.

At this point it is useful to review some characteristics of people who receive assistance benefits in BC. Based on a major review of social assistance recipients (BC Benefits, 1997) launched by the province in 1996, it is possible to make some broad statements about the people who must rely on this safety net. One interesting point is the relative mobility of this population. Between April and November of



1996, 49% of respondents started new jobs. Of these, the most common category was *hospitality, health care, and other sales or service*, with the least common being *processing, manufacturing, or utilities*. The respondents also rated personal attributes as more valuable than specific skills when looking for work, with over half believed that contacts and timing are the most important factors in gaining employment. These figures challenge the stereotype of claimants being entrenched in long term unemployment, and suggest that the post industrial economy is a reality for this group of intermittent workers, even though few people have the education seen as necessary for the information age— 43% of claimants have high school or less.

Examining the figures contained in the review suggests that 10% of BC social assistance recipients go through a labour market training program each year, though it is not possible to tell how many programs they attend, or what the duration is. However, this does suggest that some 16,000 people participate in the provision annually, a number broadly consistent with the amount of expenditure I mentioned earlier. Employment preparation programs are an important activity for the province, and for assistance recipients. For those without high school the program could be their first educational experience for some decades, though since the programs tend not to offer credentialled upgrading to GED level, one wonders what level of employment is attainable at the end of the program.

Provincial organisation still reflects the therapeutic roots of employability provision, with case managers often reincarnated rehabilitation officers from the

defunct Ministry of Social Services (Klein, 1996). Nonetheless, there are some involuntary aspects of the provision, and during the case study I learned that caseworkers usually docked the extra \$5 per day participants received to attend programs whenever a day was missed. When participants are living on a basic assistance amount of \$500 per month this is a substantial penalty. There is also considerable pressure on recipients to get off welfare into employment or training, and the process of claiming assistance involves developing a written skill and training plan to assist the recipient to become self supporting.

Provincial and federal employment preparation provision have more areas of similarity than of difference. Both ultimately consider the unemployed worker as a deficient individual to be fixed by the application of human capital. While federal documents read as business-like and the provincial ones as friendly, the ultimate effect of both is to construct unemployment as a personal trouble rather than a phenomenon of flawed social organisation. The coercive aspect of the programs, based on the neo-liberal stereotype of unemployed people as shiftless and simply needing to get motivated, contradicts the ideal that education should be voluntary, negates the citizenship of unemployed people, and contravenes the human capital view of people as value maximising. Even in its own terms, if learnfare offered a way for people to increase their income they should be lining up to get into the programs. Each of these contradictions points instead to the use of learnfare as a politically motivated mechanism to reduce unemployment figures either by

withdrawal of benefits, at which point recipients disappear, or by leaving no alternative but to accept low paying jobs.

While a theoretical review of employment preparation sounds bleak, the situation is more complex within actual programs. The money flowing into this provision has been a significant boost to the practice of adult education, and many progressive educators have ended up working in employment preparation. For participants, taking part in a program can be a life changing event. During my time working in employment preparation it was not unusual to have a participant talk with tears in their eyes about how good it felt to have a job again. Depending on the provider, programs can take an enormously humanist and inclusive approach to their task, with learners coming back for a cup of coffee years after finding employment, acknowledging the importance of a five week course in changing the outlook accrued over twenty years of unemployment. Even though the programs are predicated on the principle that unemployment is a personal trouble and not a public issue (Swift, 1995), there is some room for manoeuvre, and the format can recognise broader issues of the contemporary workplace. The question most pertinent to this study is how this flexibility can be used to further interests other than the those of the employer, as is attempted at UTP. In what ways does accepting the compromises inherent in learnfare delivery limit the project's ability to deliver union friendly education?

## Learning For Labour

The spirit of union education is quite different from that of learnfare policies, though it has also been influenced by neo-liberal constructions of unemployment and unemployed people. Unions have a history of involvement in working class education reaching back to the early years of the Industrial Revolution, and the emphasis has usually lain upon improving conditions of employment for its members. Delivering programs to unemployed people is outside the tradition for two reasons, in that it is not designed to improve working conditions and is not aimed at members. In this section I review the nature of union education and the forms it can take, as well as the influence of neo-liberalism.

In broad terms, the aim of the union movement is to secure the maximum possible benefits for workers, whether those benefits are monetary or social wages. There are several different models of unionism in the Western world, ranging from the conflictual approaches found in the UK in the 1970s, through the corporatist structures of Scandinavia, to the relatively business like approach dominating North America (Herschbach, 1994). In each case, however, the union sets out to advocate for, and to protect, the working person within the unequal power relationship through which individuals sell their labour. The key to the strength of a union is their organisational capital (Korpi, 1978), the ability to affect productivity by ensuring that all the members of a class of workers react together, whether in work to rule, overtime ban, or strike. Both the methods and the concerns of unions are inherently collective.

Recent years have seen substantial declines in union membership across the Western world (Kincheloe, 1999). This is often attributed to a combination of reduction in the types of employment traditionally associated with strong union membership, such as manufacturing, and increasing diversification in the workforce. The result of falling membership is both decreased influence in the economy as organisational capital erodes, and loss of power in individual workplaces when it comes to negotiation. One effect of such a situation is organised labour looking to produce results on soft issues like education because of the unobtainability of hard benefits such as increased wages (Jørgensen, 1997). Survival of the currently shrunken union organisations requires them to produce benefits for members and show how they are furthering the interests of workers, and if they cannot produce better financial benefits, they have to turn to other forms of capital such as education. Though in this scenario economic benefits for workers cannot be ensured directly through negotiation, they may be obtained indirectly through the rewards associated with a more educated workforce. This argument, suggestive of human capital theory once more, underpins the growing significance of labour education. As the International Labour Office put it, education “is an integral part of any satisfactory programme for economic development, a means for the improvement of the lives of working people and not an end in itself” (Poloni, 1991, p.8).

The education delivered by unions has varied a great deal over time, both in explicit goals and method. The content taught often reflects the funds available,

with topics being covered in the following order of priority (Fernau, 1991). The most important goal is to ensure the proper functioning of the organisation by training officials in the procedures to be followed in various circumstances, such as grievances. This is followed by efforts to educate members in social and economic subjects, a process potentially attracting outside funding since the aim is to help members understand the wider society in which they live and work. The next most common educational form is vocational training programs to assist members gain skills and, ultimately, income. Then follow general adult education activities including literacy, cooking, and community development. A rarer form of provision in developed countries, though not uncommon in developing nations, is designed to enhance members identify with a cultural background, including craft skills appropriate to the area. Members of the union, and potentially their immediate families, are the target group for all of these activities.

As with adult education in general, there are two discernible emphases in labour education (Devos, 1998). Labourism claims that capitalist society can be improved incrementally through the efforts of strong unions working closely with supportive political parties. In British Columbia, the provincial New Democratic Party work with the BC Federation of Labour to create labour regulations supportive of union organisation and influence upon the provincial economy. A yet stronger example is the Trades Union Congress in the UK, which for decades held a strongly influential position with the British Labour Party, though one result of this conjunction was that labour education became increasingly safe and unchallenging

politically as the union movement became incorporated into the ruling establishment (McIlroy, 1995). While labourism is interested in reformulating relations between employers and workers, building participatory mechanisms is a stronger priority.

The alternative approach to labour education is radicalism, based upon the claim that capitalist society is inherently unjust and needs to be recreated from the ground up. From this stance the interests of workers and employers are seen as fundamentally contradictory, and the work of unions is to provide workers with access to the power and resources needed to change the entire social system. This approach has been losing ground in recent years, though there have been examples of strongly Marxist union education programmes in Europe, such as the National Council of Labour Colleges in the UK (McIlroy, 1990). This perspective upon the role of education is more consistent with the founding principles of unionism and the assumption that wage relationships are exploitative, and its reduced influence can be interpreted as a substantial move to the right by organised labour.

Union education is different from many forms of education in having a strong interest in collective advancement. As Doyle (1992) argues,

. . . the development of training methods for use in workers' education and trade union training should first recognise the very special nature of the organisations from which participants are drawn. Trades unions are voluntary organisations, created to reflect by democratic means the collective interests of their members. These central characteristics—voluntaryism, democracy, and collectivity—should be reflected in trades union structures and organisation, and in trade union activities, including education and training programmes. (p.25)

The education delivered by unions varies widely across Canada, depending on the geographical situation, the industry, and the particular collective agreement. The Canadian experience has broadly reflected the priorities identified above, with a core element of training provided to officials by the unions and instrumental to the purposes of the organisation. Shop steward education, for example, has been provided in Canada by the Canadian Labour Congress, provincial federations, and individual unions (Spencer & Taylor, 1994). There have been some notable expansions in provision over the last few years, however.

One important growth area is basic skills and computer training for members, with a model developed in Ontario now being applied in several provinces including British Columbia. The current expansion of union involvement in workplace literacy education (cf. Hadley, 1996) is based upon a labourist approach, the basic proposition being that workers and employers can benefit from investment of time and resources in literacy skills. To some extent these programs meet the expressed wishes of members, and during my time with UTP a survey of the training needs of their members and discovered that computer skills were the most sought after area of education by a significant margin. This is an interesting finding since the vocation of members does not require these skills, and the expectation of gaining such education from a union for workers in food preparation suggests an implicit acceptance of the union as a site of general adult education. While little of the expanded educational provision directly opposes neo-liberal constructions of the workplace, research in the US suggests when adult education is delivered by a



union it does at least support a more participatory and collective context for learning (Imel, 1998).

Alongside the expansion into basic skills has come a spread of union education to non-traditional sites and audiences. The workplace, as opposed to union centres, is becoming more common as a venue for delivery of labour education, and there has been a parallel expansion into vocational education (Kincheloe, 1999). Preparing workers for specific jobs and companies has not been traditionally undertaken by the union movement, who have long believed that such training was the responsibility of employers. An even more significant change is the involvement of non-members in union provision, one of the earliest examples being the creation of Unemployed Workers' Centres in the UK during the 1980s. The creation of links with the unemployed has become an important consideration in labour education:

For want of a better term, we have called this "working life education" suggesting a learning agenda for trade unions that expands the understandings of the social, political, and economic transformations of recent years through critical judgement and independent study encouraged and shaped by the trade unions. Linking theoretically and organisationally the increasingly fragmented experiences of those in and out of work has become more urgent. (Forrester, 1995, p.174)

In general, labour education demands a progressive, change oriented approach to adult education for members or the community. Whether reformist or radical, the underlying aim is changing the balance of power between employers and workers considered as collective groups. Developing employer friendly programs such as workplace literacy may maintain a strong union presence in the

workplace, but also threatens to incorporate the labour movement as a training provider to capital and dilute progressivism. One commentator (Stinson O'Gorman, 1996) upon a radical workplace literacy program developed by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour points out that there are two program ideologies in action. There is an overt trade unionist orientation based on providing services for members, and a covert liberatory objective hoping to raise the consciousness of workers. The writer argues the program to be fundamentally compromised and limited because "it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a liberatory posture at all when the principal source of funding is the government and the context is North American trade unions" (p.186). The program slides towards labourism and a less confrontational understanding of workplace relations, and the overt orientation increasingly obscures the covert. While it would be an error to assume that radical programs are inherently better than labourist provision, the Saskatchewan example illustrates the difficulty of working for change while accepting state or employer funding for union education.

The increasing tendency of labour education to accept a discourse of skills in vocational education, and to some extent in literacy provision, demonstrates the power of the neo-liberal version of human capital theory. It has become a language common to employers and workers, the common sense approach (cf. Gramsci, 1971) underpinning functionalist interpretation of workplace relations on both sides. Workers become the vessel for a number of attributed skills with intrinsic value. The role of the union is to help the worker get more return upon the human capital

investment they have made, both by increasing the wages those skills attract and, in the case of labour education, by enlarging the skill set. For the employer the aim is to find workers with the greatest possible skill set at the cheapest price, and education can support this end by increasing the supply of well trained workers. The resulting credential inflation and over-supply of highly educated workers allows employers to pay minimum wage based on the logic of supply and demand. The delivery of skills based education by unions can contribute to the decline in returns to their own members by increasing the supply of skills in the labourforce. This in turn will increase the need and demand for skills, and neo-liberal human capital theory becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What both sides are overlooking is the worker as a human being and not just the jar skills happen to come in. The historical interest of unions in workers as an exploited sector of the economy whose interests should be supported and defended has been lost as unions rush to find a reason for their own existence. It is only to be expected that employers are mainly interested in the productive skills of their employees, but for the labour movement to move in the same direction is highly ironic. It is not necessary for unions to promote a stance of utopian radicalism, but a commitment to progressivism is required by their history and mission, and on no account can neo-liberal versions of human capital theory be seen as progressive. It remains possible for unions to work in education without buying completely into neo-liberal economics, and important among these would be recognising international issues and the need for increased industrial democracy (Kincheloe,

1999). Considerations of the collective can provide a rich and inspiring background to the acquisition of individual skills where people learn not only how to do their job, but what it means to do it. The dignity and self-respect of workers, surely a basic aspiration of labour organisations, requires more than a clinical exchange of human capital for cash.

In summary, union education is changing as the accepted views of the workplace change. While still committed to improving the lot of workers, provision has begun to expand both in form and inclusiveness, and the improvements are seen on the level of workers in the individual rather than collective sense. One challenge for unionism is to find a way to deliver their broader education programs without losing focus on the central imperative to provide a critique of contemporary workplace relations. This does not require radicalism, but does necessitate maintaining a distance from the interests of employers, and from the market driven political, economic, and social excesses of neo-liberal philosophies. This is the challenge facing UTP as they attempt to deliver learnfare with a difference.

### Beyond Opposition?

For a union training project to deliver learnfare provision, a form of education demonstrably designed to favour the interests of management, is to take another step towards conflating the interests of employers and workers. I have argued that union education has become more labourist and interested in building coalitions, and UTP's work can be seen as an extension of this trend. However, delivering learnfare appears to constitute an important further step away from the

possibility of critique and redistribution of power to the workers. The aims of learnfare, and contemporary workplace training of any sort, have been described as an attempt to persuade workers to accept less money and less power.

Their struggle is to convince sceptical workers to accept a continuous agenda that is clearly undermining long-standing contractual work rules through job combinations and flexible work practices. The primary role of the company's cultural training is to convince workers to accept an ideology of competitiveness within which the standardisation, increased flexibility, and intensification of their jobs "make sense" and appear to be the only logical route to take if the firm and the job are to remain viable. (Hadley, 1996, p.255)

Many aspects of learnfare are strongly antithetical to the core of union philosophy. Where learnfare emphasises individualism, unions are inherently more concerned with collective interpretations of the workforce. The idea of individual deficit makes little sense in a union context, where any skills mismatch would be more likely to be regarded as an opportunity for the employer to provide training. The notion of reduced state intervention has historically been antithetical to the corporatist philosophy of unions, and though this is not an essential opposition unions were supportive of state mediated socialism for many years. In a similar way, the coercive, disciplinary, and short term nature of learnfare does not fit with the traditional union emphasis on long term employment freely chosen by the worker. In each of these aspects, learnfare is not just union neutral, as computer training could be regarded, but directly harmful to the labour agenda.

UTP justify their involvement in employment preparation on the grounds that it is an attempt to offer educational access to groups who would usually not have an opportunity to participate in apprenticeship training. The tension between

the broad philosophy of unionism and learnfare is acknowledged by the administrators, but they see being involved in employment preparation as a necessary evil. As quoted in chapter 2, one union official suggested the responsibility of the union goes beyond “the bread and butter issues” to the wider community. The means of addressing that responsibility for UTP is to deliver an effective employment preparation program putting the needs of the learners, and their community, before the needs of the interests driving the programs.

This is the key to understanding how tensions between unionism and learnfare is resolved at UTP. The process of employment preparation is de-politicised, and viewed as a simple matter of serving the common good, thereby side-stepping the vexing question of employers and employees having potentially different interests. A liberal approach to working class education is set within the context of North American, pro-business unionism. This shows up in the union’s insistence on having industry committees designing the programs, and the degree of credence attached to the notion that both employers and workers benefit from having an educated workforce. As one of the UTP administrators cited in chapter 2 emphasised, “they both need a trained labour force to the benefit of both and they co-operate very well.” This interpretation of the benefits of labour organisation allows UTP to emphasise the individual and side-step issues arising from the collective concerns of workers.

The entire process of selecting unemployed people, putting them through a training course including lifeskills, basic skills, and vocational preparation is

constructed as an apolitical endeavour. It is believed that the interests served are those of the individual and their community, rather than wider economic and political structures. This approach allows the union to concentrate on individual success and disregard matters such as the difficulty of exercising labour power in the late 1990s. It is hardly surprising that employers are willing to pay into the union training fund if they are confident that such payments will both keep labour peace and ensure that the energy and time of the union will be spent to their advantage. For the project to move away from their acceptance of employment preparation as a neutral process would force them to acknowledge the philosophical and ethical difficulties of union involvement in the development of workers with low expectations of their place in the post-industrial world. In addition, accepting this analysis would require giving up state and corporate resources. The apolitical, consensus building approach is an essential component of the organisations' ability to manoeuvre in order to survive and to expand while claiming to recognise the interests of the individual worker.

The continual emphasis upon seeing learners as whole people fits well with Jørgensen's (1997) argument, based on a study of Danish industry, that in order to be successful union education must take account of workers' interests, including social interests. There must be recognition of the subjective side of workers' lives, not just of the technical rational structures of management. However, Jørgensen goes on to argue that debates about workplace education have elucidated "the political nature of skills and the organisation of work, and an awareness of conflict,

exploitation and domination” (p.7). These aspects of subjectivity are not acknowledged at UTP, and as I will show in my analysis of instructional practices (chapter 6), instructors are not permitted to discuss unionism within the project’s employment preparation provision. The holistic worker UTP aims to develop is not a political worker, and avoidance of the political is the price the project pays for survival.

The social mission of the project is a critical part of its approach, functioning as a means to define a space between the demands of learnfare and those of unionism. They have stepped back from the more progressive requirements of unionism by placing their emphasis upon the individual and avoiding critique of workplace relations. They have also moved away from some aspects of the underlying philosophy of learnfare by defining their work in humanist terms, designed to emphasise potential improvement in the social and community lives of individual learners. This leaves UTP between the discourses, able to exercise the control necessary to pursue their objective of showing how unionism can be a relevant, positive force in the world of work.

Maintaining their position between labour and learnfare involves a lot of strategic thinking on the part of UTP. Constant effort has to be expended to maintain the balance, and I was told a number of times that it would have been all too easy to collapse into a generic learnfare program. The project has to balance employer involvement in program design with the interests of the union and active participation in the BC Federation of Labour, and only a highly collaborative view



of the role of labour organisations makes the balance attainable. The support of state funders is another crucial element contributing to the viability of the programs, as is the credibility the project has built in the trades community through their commitment to the social mission. The philosophy of the project's founders is highly adapted to the context in which it must be applied, since it not only provides principles and goals for the organisation but also makes it possible for UTP to move toward them.

While the approach adopted by UTP provides a degree of resolution to the tension between unionism and neo-liberal approaches to unemployment, the implications of their philosophy are less clear. UTP founders claim to have moved beyond the opposition between capital and labour, and to have discovered a way for all interests to be served. However, an equally strong argument can be made to suggest they have simply moved away from opposition rather than created a new synthesis. As I will show in the thematic chapters, UTP strives to avoid curricular knowledge discomfiting to the current workplace relations, and consistently presents employment in conventional workplaces as desirable. There is little critique or consideration of alternatives. This is all the more tragic given the lengths UTP has gone to in order to ensure the organisation does have enough room to manoeuvre to make critical educational provision feasible. I am left questioning whether UTP has moved beyond opposition or simply created a form of delivery driven by such a strong moral stance nobody is willing to oppose it.

## Chapter Review

The aim of this chapter has been to illustrate a significant tension in the political and philosophical background of UTP. On the one hand, neo-liberalism promotes an individualistic, human capital derived view of the labour market denying the value of intervention or collective action. On the other, unionism claims to have a progressive, collective interpretation of the labour process. Employment preparation as a form of union education becomes an interesting site for struggle, as it attempts to promote the reproductive interests of employers and the progressive interests of workers.

Union Training Project have stepped beyond that contradiction by creating a program with individual elements, consistent with neo-liberal learnfare, and humanist elements, consistent with some forms of unionism. By doing so they have created for themselves a limited space to manoeuvre in pursuit of their social mission. In chapter 4 I set out my theoretical entry point for analysing such a complex, and contradictory, setting.

## **Chapter 4: Making Structures Visible**

When I approached Union Training Project in order to begin my data collection, I wanted to have a theoretical model of curriculum in mind. This, I believed, would help me to shape my enquiries and provide an initial structure for data analysis. I wanted to ask critical questions about the selection and delivery of knowledge at UTP, but to do so in a concrete way, linking theoretical concerns and empirical experience. The work of the new sociologists encourage this kind of praxis oriented focus in research, and Basil Bernstein provided me with a framework that contained a great deal of potential for clarifying the influences on curriculum formation at UTP.

The central idea of Bernstein's approach is that of codes, a notion derived from linguistics. He argues that classroom interaction can usefully be examined by asking about the form of codification occurring when everyday knowledge is re-contextualised into curricular knowledge. He suggests that there are two broad, and somewhat idealised, types of codification—elaborated codes, which are clearly bounded and instructor led, able to be delivered in many situations, and restricted codes, which are more open and student led, but also tend to be more limited in application. By examining the educational practices at UTP, it is possible to recognise the characteristics of these codes in operation, and to examine the practical effect. More importantly for my analysis of curricular creation, I can ask what influences are pulling a particular set of classroom interactions towards more

restricted or elaborated forms. Codes help to make these influences visible and open to examination in terms of their origins and implications.

In this chapter I do not go into the data collected at UTP in great depth, preferring to leave it to appear in the chapter discussing the most relevant theme. My intention here is to explain how I used Bernstein's work to form my insights and analysis towards a coherent whole. His structures provide a useful organising framework for data collection and analysis, but tend to provide little explanation for the phenomena observed. Drawing out the full implications requires careful thought and analysis using other theoretical lenses, and in this chapter I explain my use of Bourdieu as a complementary approach. Bernstein provides the "what" and Bourdieu provides insights into the "why."

### The Codes Of Curriculum

Bernstein has spent most of his academic life reworking a single set of ideas about the transmission of knowledge. He began his research because of a fascination with the relationship between culture and power (Apple, 1992), and a desire to "understand the nature of symbolic control" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 113). Early work in the company of linguists led Bernstein to adopt the notion of language codes to explain the structures underlying educational processes, though the notion of code as he uses it includes both language and practice. One highly influential analysis of 1970s sociology of education hailed him as "the harbinger of a new synthesis" (Karabel & Halsey, 1977, p. 62) between empirical and conceptual investigation. However, he has been content to spend the last 25 years reworking

the theoretical tapestry of his schema, and empirical investigation of his concepts is hard to find.

Bernstein developed the concepts of classification and framing to model the way education reproduces categories. He follows Durkheim (1938) in seeing categorical organisation of the world as the dominant force in shaping language and thought. An example of a categories in action is a library, which divides the textual world into internally consistent subject areas, but in doing so attracts different readers and writers to each of those categories, and divides the publishing industry according to specialist type. In this way categories extend beyond the things or ideas they contain to influence many aspects of social interaction. Bernstein believes that pedagogic situations are important sites for the reproduction of categories, and for him pedagogic situations go far beyond education to include any “fundamental social practice through which cultural reproduction-production takes place” (1996, p. 17). The present discussion will be limited to educational settings, and classification and framing are regarded as ways to capture the mechanisms lying behind cultural reproduction in education.

Bernstein’s idea of classification concerns “relations between categories, whether these categories are between agencies, between agents, between discourses, between practices” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 20). In the library an example is the relationship between different types of books and journals, and the people involved with each. Where there is clear division between categories, as there is between academic subjects, classification is strong. Situations featuring less

division, such as general reading, have far weaker classification. It must always be remembered that classification involves people as well as curricular concerns, because it concerns the way humans construct and order their world. In an educational setting the division of labour among instructors and students, as well as the strength of the barriers between instructors and students, is an important aspect of the transmission process. The critical factor in assessing classification is the degree of insulation between categories. As Bernstein argues:

There are two basic rules that are sufficient to generate this whole section of the model. Where we have strong classification, the rule is: things must be kept apart. Where we have weak classification, the rule is: things must be brought together. But we have to ask, in whose interest is the apartness of things, and in whose interest is the new togetherness and the new integration? (1996, p. 26)

One effect of classification is to carry power relations. Weak and strong classifications represent different ways of constructing the relationship between, for example, the instructor and the student. Weaker classification in this area will lead to more equality between the two individuals and less hierarchy, while stronger classification makes the distinction between people more evident. Bernstein also reminds us that it is important to be cautious about assuming that any particular form of classification is inherently good or bad. After the form of the classification is established there is more work to be done exploring the reasons for, and implications of, the particular classificatory form.

One of the most powerful means by which classification reproduces power relations is by obscuring the arbitrary nature of categories. "The principle of classification comes to have the force of the natural order and the identities that it

constructs are taken as real, as authentic, as integral, as the source of integrity” (p. 21). There are many such categories embedded in the everyday world, ranging from broad shared classifications such as class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality to more specific examples such as good movies, tasty food, or attractive dogs. Both weak and strong classification communicate certain messages about the way things are, and should be. For many years there was strong classification of educational outcomes, for example, and a university education for their child was the dream of every parent. It seemed to be part of the natural order of things that degrees ensured employment and prosperity. In current times, a degree is of ever decreasing value, and a good trades apprenticeship is at least as likely to lead to a satisfactory lifestyle. Changes in circumstance have demonstrated the arbitrary nature of the division between university as good and everything else as second rate.

Classification can be summarised as the strength of the boundaries between people, subject areas, resources, or any other categories. When it is strong, things must be kept apart, and the involvement of power relations in this apartness makes it highly likely that there will be some degree of hierarchical relationship. When classification is weak, things are brought together, and there will be less hierarchy. In either case, however, the evaluation of the pedagogic setting cannot be based purely on the form of the code, since different codes have different implications in different settings.

While classification refers to the relations between categories, framing examines “the different forms of legitimate communication realised in any

pedagogic practice” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 26), or the relations *within* categories. It concerns communication between individuals, and specifically “the means of acquiring the legitimate message” (p. 26) in any particular setting. It controls patterns of learning and the behaviour of both the instructor and the student in the classroom. The difference between stronger and weaker framing is where the locus of control over communication lies, and in educational settings strength of framing depends on whether the instructor or the student controls the educational process. In an adult learning setting based on andragogical principles (Knowles, 1980) the framing is relatively weak, whereas in university settings it is far stronger.

There are two elements of framing. The instructional discourse (ID) contains those factors that are often considered the frames of pedagogy (cf. Lundgren, 1981), in other words the pragmatic elements of delivery. It is here that the selection of the communication, its sequencing, its pacing and its criteria are considered (Bernstein, 1996). Instructional discourse deals directly with control over the content of educational communication, the order the content is delivered in, the speed it is delivered, and the evaluation of successful communication. A strongly framed instructional discourse places this control in the hands of the instructors, while a more weakly framed discourse permits learners to influence these factors. Metaphorically, it is the difference between a lecture and a conversation.

The second element is the regulative discourse (RD), concerned with control of social order in the educational setting. Once again what matters in assessing the strength of framing is who has control over the appropriate behaviour, since



whoever controls the behavioural norms has the ability to include or exclude individuals or groups based on their willingness to play the game. Schools exercise this form of control a great deal, using suspensions as a serious form of punishment for inappropriate behaviour. Regulative discourse can cover dress, speech, punctuality, and many other aspects of classroom behaviour of students.

The regulative discourse precedes the instructional discourse. "In other words, the instructional discourse is always embedded in the regulative discourse, and the regulative discourse is the dominant discourse" (Bernstein, 1995, p. 28). One way to conceive of this is to imagine a set of actions legitimised by the regulative discourse, only some of which are allowed in classroom interaction, which are then overlaid with specifically pedagogical rules. At the same time, ID cannot permit behaviours ruled out by the RD of the setting. For example, in an elementary school conversation between students is seen as valuable behaviour, but only on particular occasions within the classroom. This manifests in the pedagogical rule that students should pay attention when the teacher talks. If the RD of the school disallows bullying, however, it cannot be accepted as part of the ID. Instructional discourse is a tighter behavioural filter screening those actions permitted by the regulative discourse.

What happens in educational interaction is a blend of particular behavioural expectations with particular forms of communication. Neither of these is randomly chosen, for just like classification they carry covert messages about how actions are legitimated as well as the specific content itself. If the students have substantial

control over educational communication, this can teach them that they can expect to participate in decision making in group settings as well as teaching them to actually perform that task. Framing contains both a “what” message about that specific setting and a “how” message about the way in which rules are set in education.

Classification and framing can be considered as independent aspects of education, but they generally vary together. By examining classification and framing we can learn about the code appropriate to any pedagogic encounter, how participants are told what is relevant, the meaning of the relevant content, how to go about recreating it, and how to interact in that context. Codes tell us both where we stand, and how to act there. Pulling the tendencies of classification and framing together, it is possible to arrive at two broad forms of code, one with +C +F and the other with -C -F.

The first of these forms, with strong framing and classification attached to it, is called the elaborated code. One interesting aspect of this code is that the rules of communication are not contextual, but embedded in the code itself. Computer languages are a good example of this, in that it does not matter who is doing the programming, or where, since as long as the syntax is absolutely correct the operation will be performed. Elaborated codes can be used very widely, since the cultural background of participants in the communication is irrelevant. In educational settings, elaborated codes involve very strong recontextualisation, with ideas and issues from the everyday world removed from their initial context and

fully rendered into the code. The code acts as a comprehensive lens for looking at reality, and the form dominates content. A further example of an elaborated code is television news, which recontextualises events such as earthquakes into anchorspeak. This makes the content more widely available to people who know anchorspeak, but strips the information of emotional, political, human, or spiritual dimensions. Elaborated codes are tightly controlled, but able to transcend locality.

A code with weak classification and framing is a restricted code, so called because it is restricted to the specific arena of its use. It is far less generalisable than elaborated codes because the rules are not explicitly contained within the code. Bernstein describes the perfect form of the restricted code as “exclusively local, totally context dependant, implicit, non-linguistic” (1995, p. 10). The emphasis on original context means that communication is predicated on shared circumstance rather than explicit features of speech, and restricted codes require a shared culture with values and meanings in common. One interesting place to observe this code is between people who have lived or worked together for many years, and who speak in telegraphic forms unintelligible to outsiders. Restricted codes are used by people with a great deal in common and shared control of the communicative process, but are limited in their application.

These code forms can be observed the North American standard form of small group work, where the first few minutes of a group are often spent negotiating the establishment of a temporary restricted code. The group members strive to recognise the values of others and get their values recognised in turn, and the

working phase of the group is often a communal experience. The ideas developed then have to be communicated back to a larger group, which involves translation of scribbles on a flipchart, which the small group understand, into something the whole room can comprehend. Very often the person reporting back begins by talking about the process of the group because they want to establish the context for the restricted code communication. When I turn down the opportunity of reporting back to the larger group it is most often because I am daunted not by what the small group has to say, but by the task of translating into a standard form of English.

Over the years there has been a great deal of discussion about whether restricted codes are a deficient form of communication. Bernstein's own work links restricted codes to the working class and elaborated codes to the middle class, and he cites various examples of research supporting this allocation (1977; 1990). He argues that middle class children have access to both restricted and elaborated codes, while working class children have only restricted codes, stating that "it is the case that the class principles of the social division of labour and its social relations locate and distribute production codes (elaborated and restricted) differentially within its hierarchy" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 110). It is not necessary to repeat the discussions in any detail, and it should be sufficient to state that Bernstein himself has always denied the deficit hypothesis, referring instead to difference. Restricted codes do not carry less information than elaborated codes (cf. Labov, 1969), and what matters is their relationship to the context and the uses to which they can be put.

Elaborated and restricted codes are ideal types, and in analysing real life communication it is more useful to think of the strength of classification and framing as tendencies rather than absolutes. They are relational factors and it is helpful to think of stronger or weaker framing rather than applying them as ideal poles of an opposition. Looking at codes allows us to show how the Free Schools of the 1960s had weaker classification and framing than academic private schools during the same period without setting either upon a continuum. In this study, codes provide an excellent way of looking at tensions within the learnfare curriculum in terms of pulls toward more elaborated or more restricted forms. It becomes possible to look at one frame factor, for example, and ask what are the influences tending to strengthen the framing, and what is tending to weaken it? Bernstein's work provides a rigorous and interesting way to address the tensions of curriculum at UTP in concrete detail without losing sight of larger theoretical concerns.

I found the development of questions around classification more difficult than those around framing in the case of UTP. The project is quite different from a school, and the empirical applications of Bernstein's theory have largely been conducted in British primary schools with relatively clear classificatory systems. For UTP I had to choose between many forms of classification, and in the end I chose the ones which seemed to make sense and to be addressable. In my data collection and analysis I expressed them within three questions:

- What influences the strength of subject classification?

- What influences the strength of instructor classification?
- What influences the strength of participant classification?

I dealt with four aspects of framing during the study, combining the factors of order and pace since they are so closely related:

- What influences the location of control over behaviour in the setting?
- What influences the location of control of educational content?
- What influences the location of control of order and pace?
- What influences the location of control over criteria of success?

Bernstein's work is abstract and complex, but it does provide a useful starting point for analysis of educational settings. On one hand, data gathering is simplified because it becomes possible to enter the setting with a number of clear questions in mind. On the other, Bernstein's work helps to create the link between concrete observations and the theoretical meaning of educational practices. What it lacks, as I have mentioned, is an evaluative or prescriptive component. Nonetheless, using Bernstein's framework to clarify the complex interactions of a setting like UTP learnfare programs is a valuable first step in analysis.

The following diagram summarises the understanding of Bernstein's perspective on curricular codes I applied to this study.

**Stronger=** Elaborated code



	<b>Location</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<b>Classification</b>	Between categories	What influences the strength of subject classification? What influences the strength of instructor classification? What influences the strength of participant classification?
<b>Framing</b>	Within categories	<u>Regulative discourse (behaviour)</u> What influences the location of control over behaviour setting?  <u>Instructional discourse (pedagogy)</u> What influences the location of control of educational content? What influences the location of control of order and pace? What influences the location of control over criteria of success?

**Weaker=** Restricted code

*Figure 3.1 A summary of classification and framing*

### Making Codes Concrete At UTP

The curriculum at UTP is neither a pure elaborated code or a pure restricted one, but as with all educational settings, it shows some features of both, with a constantly evolving balance between elaboration and restriction. The codes are not set once and for all, but must constantly be reallocated and reinforced. The form of the curriculum is an ongoing social accomplishment (cf. Garfinkel, 1967) involving the state, UTP administrators, instructors, and participants, who together set the limits of knowledge in the program. The influences I record in this study are intended to exemplify the complex relationships within which a curriculum comes together rather than catalogue them exhaustively. However, I do believe that the tensions and conflicts I describe are a fair description of the educational process at UTP over the summer of 1998.

The holistic philosophy at UTP supports the idea that classification between subjects should be relatively weak in the curriculum. If the role of the individual as worker is not viewed as strongly separate from their role as family or community member, then it would follow that life skills, literacy, and concrete vocational skills should be regarded as essentially seamless. After all, it makes little sense to set reading and writing apart from the emotional and practical skills used to navigate everyday life if literacy is seen to contain both emotional and practical dimensions. As I collected data at UTP I was paying particular attention to elements suggesting that an integrated delivery of subjects was in place. Balancing these elements were those supporting a stronger division of subjects, both between programs and within them. In the CABS program I observed most closely I was looking for the ways it was set apart from, or brought closer to, other UTP programs, as well as the way the curriculum was divided up between lifeskills, basic skills, and vocational elements.

The same kind of question was also applied to the perception of instructors. How were the instructors viewed within the whole organisation? Were they seen as part of the organisation, or as different in some way? Were all instructors treated the same way? Not only did I ask instructors, administrators, and funders for their views on these topics, I was also able to observe a number of incidents adding to my understanding of the role of educators within the organisation. The UTP philosophy suggests that all staff should be treated equitably, as consistent with a wider labour viewpoint, but the situation I observed was considerably more complex.



The classification of participants was an area proving to offer many critical insights. As I collected data on this aspect of UTP I was interested in how the organisation viewed learners, how they were divided up, and what attributes were ascribed to each of those divisions. There was a great deal of data on these divisions, which fundamentally shape the work done at the project. The way of viewing participants directly bears on the knowledge offered by educators in the program. If they are viewed as suffering some sort of deficit it leads to a different curriculum than if they are approached as competent, and complete, adults.

An example of an observation reflecting the formal Bernsteinian analysis of classification is the division between basic skills and vocational program elements, a topic to be explored at greater length throughout this study. I observed that these two topics were treated differently in many ways, with vocational training given a lot of status in the organisation, and basic skills viewed as a necessary precursor to gaining work but given little recognition in its own right. I collected observation, interview, and documentary evidence around this phenomenon, and in doing so realised that the same division also applied to the individuals who were instructing each of the subjects. I collected information about the manifestation of these divisions, realising they were similar to structures Bernstein had observed operating in secondary schools and universities (cf. 1990).

This and many other examples lead me to realise the integrated philosophy espoused by the organisation is not given free rein within the educational process, since there are still examples of strong classification inconsistent with this

approach. It is not surprising that strong classification exists at all, since it would be hard to imagine an unclassified educational program, but it is surprising when its manifestations contradict an explicit commitment of the organisation. The overall picture I developed of classification at UTP is an organisation that has reached a workable balance of weakening and strengthening factors. The end of transmitting employability skills, suggesting a relatively instrumental approach, is countered by the desirability of using holistic and integrated means. The balance between these two imperatives could manifest in many different forms of code, and I believe that if the education delivered by UTP were not contracted to the state it would be in a much more weakly classified form.

I applied a similar method to the framing of educational process. In this case my central concern was where the control of the interaction lay, and what affected it. Instructional discourse, often seen as the real stuff of education, was a fruitful area of enquiry. Instructors were able to tell me directly about the content of the education and how order and pace were decided, and I was then able to compare these comments to my observations of the instructional process in action. Control over the classroom is very much a result of continued negotiation between those involved, and I had the chance to watch a number of experienced instructors as they went through this process. Far less negotiation was involved in evaluation, not least because UTP answers to a number of external interests with clear expectations of what the outcomes of the programs will be.

My interest in education as a mechanism for cultural reproduction led to a particular interest in regulative discourse since it reflects the way individuals are acculturated into a set of expectations. One of the roles performed by UTP is to take unemployed people and teach them what behavioural expectations are held of workers by, amongst others, employers. I wondered, based on my reading of Willis (1977) and other critical analysts, what kind of sanctions would be imposed on those not going along with the behavioural expectations, and what kind of resistance would emerge. The data I collected showed a strong frame on regulative discourse, with the values of the agency regarding workplace behaviour dominating the educational process. I found little evidence of effective resistance, or even questioning, of the project's expectations.

An example of the findings arising from analysis of frames concerns content. The components of the programs vary in the extent to which their content is pre-determined, though each day of the entire six month program has to be programmed as part of the original proposal. In the vocational components, this framework is taken extremely seriously, and it is relatively straightforward to follow it since the course is based on a written manual. In addition, the vocational components often involve production of some good for the wider community, such as a hot meal each evening. Learners need to have learned the content associated with the meal they are expected to produce before they make it. However, in basic skills there is no such external pressure, and no such manual. There is far more flexibility, and the proposal is treated as a rough guide rather than a timetable.

Basic skills instructors also identified their commitment to inclusive, learner-centred process as a strong influence on program content. The overall effect of this difference is that participants move from a weakly framed component into a more strongly framed one as they get closer to work experience and potential employment.

The result of the analysis using Bernstein's framework was a listing of the influences pulling towards weaker or stronger classification and framing in each of the areas I have listed. To this point I had identified phenomena of interest, and found influences providing a partial explanation of why the balance of elaboration and restriction lay where it did. However, the framework lacked explanatory power, reflecting my comments about Bernstein's work earlier in this chapter. Review of the matrix suggested that several aspects of the pedagogy were influenced by similar considerations. For example, the way that behavioural norms were referenced to workplace expectations affected classification of subjects, of instructors, and participants, as well as framing of regulative discourse and evaluation. Also, having the findings organised according to Bernstein's framework seemed too orthographic, insufficiently representative of the fluidity of the setting.

At that point I decided to flip the matrix so that the influences became the headings, and the Bernsteinian data points became evidence regarding their manifestation. This led to the identification of four themes to lead the analysis in this study: the structure of staff and subjects, the concrete instructional practices at UTP, the way the organisation deals with difference, and the notion of the good

employee dominating the process. Each of these themes demonstrates a tension between elaborated and restricted codes worthy of exploration both in concrete terms and from a more theoretical standpoint. Using Bernstein to develop themes in this way is logically consistent with his theory, and also allows for more organic discussion of the setting, increasing the validity of findings by explicitly allowing data collected to shape the theoretical stance.

The four main themes are discussed in the following chapters, presenting a portrait of the concerns shaping adult education at UTP. Each of the discussions focuses on empirical evidence for my explication of the process of curricular development at UTP. However, I wanted to go a little further and pull those themes back together again, making sense of them in the context of a whole program. Chapter 9 is the result of this process, going beyond Bernstein to apply Bourdieu's theories of capital transfer as an explanatory mechanism. In the following section I show how the work of these two theorists interlinks to create a powerful means of generating insights.

### Forms Of Code And Forms Of Capital

I mentioned early in chapter 3 that one of the challenges of using Bernstein's work is developing arguments beyond the descriptive. The first strategy I adopted was to develop themes in the manner described above, and the second was to link Bernstein to a theorist tackling the wider implications of pedagogic codes and the knowledge they transmit. Given the similar period during which their work developed Bourdieu is a reasonable choice for this role, and bringing his work

alongside that of Bernstein adds a great deal of insight into why a particular form of transmission is developed. As suggested in the introduction, the combined approach allows the what and the why to be brought together. This section aims to introduce Bourdieu's approach and show why it fits so well with Bernstein, but detailed explanation will take place in chapter 9.

Bourdieu has written extensively on the nature of education and social classification, and I will apply three of his key ideas in the analysis of UTP. These are the notion of capital forms beyond the economic, the concept of field, and the associated idea of habitus. These elements are closely linked in Bourdieu's explanation of how social structures reproduce themselves, and particularly in his conception of class structures, to which I will return shortly. There are strong similarities between the ways Bernstein and Bourdieu perceive the operation of education.

To begin with capital, Bourdieu (1997) suggests that in addition to economic capital there are social and cultural forms. There are two significant differences between Bourdieu's use of capital and human capital theory. The first is that human capital theory emphasises the individual's accumulation of a single catch all form of capital, whereas Bourdieu sees many types of capital possessed by certain social groupings. Secondly, while human capital theory is premised on an economic level playing field, Bourdieu is more interested in the differential distribution of capital forms. Far from level, Bourdieu sees the pitch as significantly tilted in

favour of those who already have capital. In both these respects, Bourdieu's capital forms are consistent with Marxist perspectives on economic capital.

For Bourdieu all of the forms of capital have common characteristics, since all basically represent accumulated human labour. Each takes time to acquire, and once acquired makes some things possible and others not. Bourdieu also sees translation between the types as quite viable, though this may involve a large amount of effort. In this scheme each type of capital is fundamentally related to each of the others, having a common derivation, though the manifestation and use of each form is different. These forms of capital are not presented as exhaustive, but as important forms in the educational process.

The cultural form of capital arises from having the right education, being born into a relatively high status family, and developing knowledge of how to act effectively to attain desired ends in appropriate contexts. Social capital is the network of obligations and power arising from membership in a group providing members with access to collectively owned capital. A good example to summarise the forms of capital is a private school, where the family's economic capital in the form of fees is converted into cultural capital for the student as they get good marks and progress to a high status university. In addition, the student gains social capital through the development of a life long network of contacts with similar privilege. The accumulated cultural and social capital can then be converted back into economic capital as it is used to obtain well paid employment.

Every member of a society has an amount of social and cultural capital, but some forms are more valuable and easily converted than others. A person on social assistance, often thought of as having little cultural capital, may have access to significant amounts of social capital. Single parents, for example, may have a strong network of friends and relatives providing mutual support in terms of babysitting or toy exchange. This form of social capital is less easily converted, however, than being Conrad Black's nephew. One implication of this line of thought is that social and cultural capital recognise the same stratificatory and accumulative principles as economic capital, and that risk and return are legitimate concerns in the transmission and investment of these forms. For example, the social capital associated with membership of the professoriate is only given to those passing a lengthy training and testing process, and indeed the applicant's cultural capital may be a factor in their acceptance into the earliest stages of the education.

The second notion of Bourdieu's applied in this study is *habitus*. This term refers to the tendency of individuals to recreate without deliberate intention the conditions bringing them into being, such as a middle class teacher who creates a classroom context privileging the values and aspirations of the middle class. Bourdieu describes *habitus* as "the systems of disposition to a certain practice" (1990a, p.77) and comments "the *habitus* which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences,



of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class” (1990b, p.60). This process is unconscious because habitus affects how we think– and what we perceive– as much as what we do. As Bourdieu cautions, “the practices of members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonised than the agents know or wish . . .” (1990b, p.59). Without volition we act to reproduce that with which we are familiar.

Field, the final element, represents a particular social space with specific forms of cultural and social capital attached to it. To continue the example above, the academic field has been explored in great detail by Bourdieu (1988), and the mechanisms of capital formation for French university faculty described. Field means more than the sense of specialism occasionally used in academic circles, however, and each individual operates in a number of fields continually. The vocational field is one of the most important because it indicates and constitutes the person’s position in the occupational hierarchy, and reflects their class. There are strong similarities between the use of field in Bourdieu’s work and the term “discipline” Bernstein uses to denote an area of practice. Each field in which we participate has particularly valuable forms of social and cultural capital associated with it, and a specific habitus which both reflects the conditions of the field and leads to their reproduction.

Bourdieu’s perspective on cultural reproduction provides a strong complement to Bernstein’s framework. Bernstein himself has suggested:

The concept of code bears some relation to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. The concept of habitus, however, is a more general concept,

more extensive and exhaustive in its regulation. It is essentially a cultural grammar specialized by class position and fields of practice. It is by no means clear what are the rules of the class-specialized grammars and fields of practice, nor is it clear how the specialized grammars are constructed and relayed in the process of their transmission and acquisition. But these are not the special projects of Bourdieu's project. From the point of view here, code may be regarded as an attempt to write what may be called pedagogic grammars of specialized habituses and the forms of their transmission which attempt to regulate their tradition. (Bernstein, 1990, p.3)

In this extract Bernstein suggests that his own work provides a useful framework for this type of analysis. In turn, Bourdieu's work adds depth and explanatory power to Bernstein's framework, providing a means to address why codes have the form they do, and why that matters. The two bodies of theoretical work reinforce each other and form a powerful tool for understanding the process of reproduction in education.

A number of commentators on Bernstein have made this link. Atkinson comments:

The implications of classifications for a hierarchical ordering of knowledge . . . is one of the many specific ways in which Bernstein's sociology of knowledge grows near to that of Bourdieu who argues, in a general discussion of the legitimisation of high culture in France, that it serves to demarcate caste . . . (Atkinson, 1985, p.135)

This quotation highlights the interest Bourdieu and Bernstein share in social class, how it occurs, and how it maintains itself through institutions. Each writer points out the isomorphism of boundaries of knowledge and boundaries of social structure, making it possible to work from curricular form to social relation. Selection of curricular content and pedagogic process are bound up with the wider reproduction or transformation of the ways people live and work together, and the

cultural values underpinning those forms. Education is seen both to reflect the structures of society and to underpin them. The majority of writing by both these authors focuses strongly on the class implications of educational structures, though Bernstein (1996) in particular has recently attempted to extend his work to other forms of identity. However, class position remains central to his conception of social process, with other dimensions such as gender and ethnicity working within the limits of class (Apple, 1992). For the purposes of the current study, class is interpreted in a broad sense to mean allocation to specific positions in the division of labour. This formulation, more inclusive than the formal analytical definition, is consistent with Bernstein's statement that

'class relations' will be taken to refer to inequalities in the distribution of power, and in the principles of control between social groups, which are realized in the creation, distribution, reproduction, and legitimization of physical and symbolic values that have their source in the social division of labour. (Bernstein, 1990, p.13)

Using the combination of Bernstein and Bourdieu on capital transfer as a goal of education is an interesting and insightful way to explain the dominance of particular code forms. If education functions as a means to transfer cultural capital to unemployed people, allowing them access to new fields, one of the most important factors is that the process is tightly controlled so as ensure the preservation of the value of the capital. Just as economic capital must be guarded against contamination or theft, cultural capital has to be protected against dispersion.

Knowledge . . . is dangerous, it cannot be exchanged like money, it must be confined to special well-chosen persons and even divorced from practical concerns. The forms of knowledge must always be well

insulated from each other . . . Specialisation makes knowledge safe and protects the vital principles of social order. (Bernstein, 1977, p. 74)

The details of this scheme will be laid out in chapter 9, as I apply it to my concrete observations of UTP. The discussion in the following five chapters will rely primarily upon Bernstein's work as a means to order the data and extract converging issues.

### Chapter Review

In this chapter I have laid out Bernstein's framework for analysis of pedagogic codes, and described my use of them in data collection and analysis. In summary, a more elaborated code involves stronger boundaries between areas of knowledge and the people involved in the transmission of that knowledge. In addition instructors, viewed as transmitters of educational knowledge, retain a high degree of control over the educational process. As the codes becomes more restricted, the boundaries between people and subjects breaks down, and learners are able to exercise more power. The implications of these code forms at UTP will be analysed using the work of Bourdieu, as introduced in this chapter. In the following chapter I move into the first theme identified at UTP, contradictions of their own organisational form.

## **Chapter 5: More Equal Than Others**

One of the interesting aspects of using Bernstein's theory to think about curriculum is that organisational structures are included in the analysis. Bernstein does not separate the way the education provider arranges itself from the arrangement of knowledge, and the critical point of intersection is curricular delivery. Looking at the structures of UTP from this perspective, the question to be addressed is how things are brought together or set apart in the organisation. There are two related topics in which this question plays out. The first is the organisation of subject areas and the instructors who work with them. For example, do trades and literacy instructors work together to create a blended education, or do they tend to work independently? The second topic is the way the staff are organised within the project, how hierarchical or flat the structure is. Taken together, these two topics provide strong insights into the way knowledge is conceptualised at UTP. While the claim of the founders was that their project integrated subjects in order to reflect a holistic view of learners, my observations suggested a more complex situation.

### **Separate Subjects**

As I began my research at UTP the founders of the training centre told me several times about their deep commitment to the whole person of the participant, and the multi-faceted nature of their development. This led, they suggested, to a holistic view of curricular knowledge:

It's all blended. I use the word blending. When I develop curriculums, I make sure that we blend certain things because there again, you don't want to OD a person with one thing, you've got to have a little bit of focus on everything. (UTP administrator)

Their approach, with literacy and numeracy skills contained in the same course as job related skills, is considered unusual, innovative, and effective by funders and other agencies. It is more common to have basic skills and vocational skills delivered in separate programs, often by different agencies. UTP administrators and instructors are very proud of their holistic view of program participants, and have given a great deal of thought to the designing a curriculum to reflect this philosophy of integration. The project strives to go beyond the obvious fact of unemployment and treat students as people with families, communities, responsibilities, and rights. There is acknowledgement that moving into work, particularly as a skilled tradesperson, has implications beyond the individual. In the curriculum, this means that those aspects dealing with life in a broad sense and those dealing with the workplace can be brought together. One outside writer who is frequently quoted by UTP in administrative documents described the delivery format as successfully “integrated and content based programs” (CABS proposal). The organisation is setting out to give a strong impression of consistency between the holistic view of participants and the organisation of knowledge delivered in the programs.

In addition to the philosophical pressures to integrate the curriculum as much as possible, there are also pragmatic factors. One is that the people having

problems during the classroom component are most often the same people who find the kitchen experience difficult.

What I found in the first [CABS] class is what happened with me is happened as being duplicated in the kitchen. So people who are late for class are late for [the kitchen], the people who blew up in class are blowing up in the kitchen, and they're leaving. You know, they're not being able to stay together. (basic skills instructor)

This phenomenon suggests that the more consistency and continuity between the various elements of the programs, the better. Participants are reacting in the same way to different segments of the training, and having one approach in place across the entire six month program would avoid each new instructor having to re-invent supports for each participant.

A second force acting to erode the boundaries between vocational and lifeskills components is the changing funding system. One administrator commented on the future:

[pause] I think there's going to be more sharing. I don't think there's any doubt about that, maybe because of costs involved. Government have been cutting back on costs for years. Every time you hear about a new program starting they're going to put another \$200 million in, it's the same \$200 million regurgitated you know, they're putting less money in, not more money in. So there will be more sharing.

Despite the strength of these philosophical and practical drives towards a blended curriculum, putting the idea into effect is not as straightforward as it appears, especially when it comes to finance. Historically, the system has been for either HRDC or MAETT to fund an entire program cycle, and expect exclusive access to that resource, ruling out mixed classes. However, recent moves towards purchasing individual seats allow for more flexibility, with one class containing

several EI recipients, a few Social Assistance claimants, and a number of displaced union members, each of whom would have different ways of paying for the training. It is becoming increasingly common to have multiple sources of funding for a single component, and many types of participant in the same program.

My research suggested that while there is a clear potential and support for greater integration, in practice there are limits to the blending of subjects in the agency's programs. In the data I collected two dimensions of subject separation demonstrate the operation of these limits most clearly. The first is the distinction between the different programs offered by the organisation, and the second the way content is divided within each program. Despite being at different levels, with the first concerning the organisation of knowledge external to specific programs and the second internal to programs, these structures reflect the same phenomenon of curriculum design— the division of knowledge into fields.

The first dimension of separation lies between the CABS, CARS, and sampler programs. The extent of UTP's focus on non-vocational common knowledge suggests that large areas of curriculum will be general enough to be shared by these programs. Basic computer skills or conflict resolution, for example, are valuable whether the learner will go on to be a restaurant manager, a welder, or an aviation mechanic. An administrator described the elements found in all UTP programs irrespective of topic or length:

Number 1, obviously conflict resolution and anger management is taught in all of our programs here. First week of all of our programs, they all get Superhost, they all get WHMIS which is Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. They all get that because



it's useable in all jobs. They all get first aid, CPR. Those are some of the basics.

All of our programs get basic computers. It's not in depth but it's an introduction. And you know, they get the chance to sort of work with the computer, do their resumes on it. They all get job club. All of them get job club and that sort of stuff.

Another administrator talked about the importance of creating a shared experience for all program participants. The administrator believed that a bond began to be built when groups started working on core emotional issues early in the program, and could be sustained into the more vocational areas of the curriculum.

You got to flow so you get their trust. You get them enjoying what they're hearing and putting things into practice, role playing and these type of things. So you blend [them] into the curriculum in an intricate fashion. You talk about personal needs and you get the group to talk amongst themselves and they start to bond. These are common life skill type of things.

Reflecting the belief in emotional common ground, participants from all programs share the same support systems during the program and when they reach employment. An administrator described this provision:

One thing they all have on the job is counsellors who visit the job sites or the off-site classrooms, wherever, on a regular basis to see, and do one on ones and everyone gets action plans. Where are you going, what are you doing, what do you feel your strengths are, what are your weaknesses, where do you want to see yourself?

When learners move into the more specific vocational components the programs diverge significantly due to the need to address specific job related areas of knowledge. Sharing of knowledge becomes harder to sustain, and the degree of integration of programs reduces dramatically. "Whether it's a cooking program, the cook/server program, a carpentry program, electrical program, theatre, it's all

exactly the same on the life skills” (UTP administrator). “As far as the rest goes, because we're dealing with so many various types of work placement here that's where it ends. That's where they start going off into their own different areas” (UTP administrator). The separation of these areas means classification is far stronger in work related components than in those related to social or academic development.

The second dimension of subject separation is how the internal boundaries are set within each program. The agency suggests that programs are basically seamless and participants move from lifeskills to basic skills to vocational training and work experience through a consistent process. In my observations of the CABS program, however, I saw many examples of strong boundaries within the Cooking and Basic Skills program. The first 9 weeks of the program were spent in a classroom setting working on math and language skills, followed by 9 weeks of training in a kitchen several kilometres away. There were then two weeks of job placement, a week of review and final exam, and two weeks of job club involving resume writing, interview skills and so on. Some integration of these components is assured by the introduction of cook theory in the initial 9 week classroom session, delivered by the chef who will instruct the group in the kitchen. Nonetheless, over the 23 weeks of the course, the “academic” and the “vocational” are separated both in time and in space.

This separation is emphasised by the far higher status ascribed to the vocational elements of UTP education. The employment related goal, and the form of knowledge leading to it, are emphasised from the beginning of the CABS

program. The materials used in the basic skills components are often texts which will be referred to in the kitchen, and the majority of the math and language skills covered during the basic skills education are justified by their potential application to cooking. In the classroom I observed program participants balking at some language exercises because they did not seem relevant to kitchen work and were reminiscent of the abstract exercises of initial schooling. Participants commented several times that they did not consider that the program had begun until they had done some cooking. At one point they were told that things would get more serious when they reached the kitchen: “[The chef] is from the old school.” One of the most successful exercises used by a basic skills instructor was for participants to find a recipe, their own or from a book, write it up on the computer, do the layout, and finally end up with a booklet featuring recipes from each learner. Similarly, math exercises looked at calculating recipe quantities and potential food yields. Overall, the ultimate vocational destination of the participants determined what was credible as part of the basic skills curriculum.

This permeation of the basic skills curriculum was not simple blending of subject matter. The flow was entirely one way, with vocational instructors uninterested in either life skills or basic skills. Their curriculum was, in effect, a closed entity able to spread out into other components, but guarded from contamination by other subject areas. The highly valued vocational knowledge could seep into basic skills and displace the less valued forms of knowledge associated with literacy. The example of language exercises resisted because of their

apparent irrelevance to cooking demonstrates the way in which the vocational values of knowledge displaced those of language acquisition.

Basic skills instructors sometimes felt they should focus more strongly on skills directly related to work, but that perception was contradicted by concerns that being too strongly linked into vocational imperatives can undermine the basic skills components. An instructor pointed out that the potential of literacy education to reflect the life experience of the learner is diluted by the high legitimacy given to knowledge relevant to cooking, and explained the dilemma of imposing more critical perspectives.

I want to think some more about whether the pressures of just doing cook stuff are such that you sort of give into it. And then where that line is between adult education, where you have students demanding a certain kind of thing where you're saying "no, you've got to do this newspaper writing" and is that fair. Am I being anything other than, you know, high school teacher? You know, it's a really interesting kind of dilemma. (instructor)

One particularly interesting effect of the strengthening of boundaries during vocation components is the growing separation of the work preparation objective from the social mission. In chapter 2 I mentioned that the CABS program provides local individuals with low cost meals, reflecting UTP's commitment to the community. However, the trades instructors are fairly clear that this type of project is simply a by-product of their central purpose:

Great project but we have to be very careful that these projects don't become the dominating factor. Training's the dominating factor. If we can fit the projects into it great, but we should never try and fit the training into the projects.

Overall, there is strong division between vocational and basic skills areas of the curriculum, with the possibilities for integration becoming more limited as the program progresses. Holism, and the social mission of UTP, become less relevant as the time for participants to enter the workplace approaches. This difference was not just on the abstract level of curricular design, but played out in the way instructors were viewed within the project. The basic skills instructors were very much the contract based temporary help, while trades instructors were seen as assets of the organisation. One administrator commented on a vocational instructor:

Yeah, it's professional standards and our executive chef is well-known in the industry. In fact he wrote the text book, you know. He was the dean of, associate dean of culinary arts at [a local college] for many years, so he's got that, you know he's got the certification to do what he does. And he runs it, that's the way he runs it. [The executive chef] is the ultimate professional.

Professionalism was seen as important, as was the ability of the instructor to give participants a flavour of what it was really like in a given work setting.

We do try to have our instructors relate to any particular industry. I'm a great believer in being anecdotal in front of the class cause that gives you credibility with the class. Don't stand there and read out of a book and then tell them about stuff, the way it should be. You've got to have a little anecdote, then they know that you've been there all the time.  
(UTP administrator)

Practical knowledge of the trade is believed to increase the vocational instructors' credibility with students as well as the organisation. One instructor was given a lot of credit for having been involved in writing the provincial apprenticeship textbook for a particular trade, as well as having been the dean for that subject area in a local college. Part of practical knowledge is the ability to be

anecdotal with the participants, mentioned to me as an important strength. “Don't stand there and read out of a book and then tell them about stuff, the way it should be. You've got to have a little anecdote, then they know that you've been there all the time.” (UTP administrator)

Vocational instructors are seen as experienced experts, master tradespeople with years of successful work under their belt and strong knowledge of what life in the workforce is like. Basic skills instructors are seen somewhat differently, and there is no source of credibility comparable with the experience of trades instructors. Occasionally the high status trades instructors act in a way that undermines the basic skills instructors further. During my classroom observations I saw a trades instructor, in this case a chef, address a class of participants with a basic skills instructor in the room. The students way of speaking with the chef was respectful, and they appeared to confer a great deal of status upon the individual. The basic skills instructor stayed quiet while the chef was present, and afterwards I noticed that the participants spoke far more casually and freely when the basic skills instructor was alone with them. This pattern continued into the kitchen segment of the program, reflecting the different demands the instructors placed upon the learners as well as the formal relationship participants were encouraged to develop with vocational instructors.

Trades instructors could be blatantly dismissive of basic skills instructors and their work. During a cook theory session, where the chef comes into the basic skills classroom for part of a day, one participant asked if the work they were doing

with the basic skills instructor counted towards their final mark. The chef replied that it did not. The chef's marks are "nothing to do with" the basic skills instructor, and that "what I'm concerned with is what I teach you— I don't care if you can spell or if your grammar's bad if you can convince me you know the answer." During the break I chatted briefly with the chef, who told me how important it was to have a trades background in order to teach. The chef appeared concerned about the cooking related subject matter in the basic skills instructor's curriculum, and felt that the instructor "is trying to teach a subject she knows nothing about."

The basic skills instructors can find it difficult to work with the vocational instructors, as their fundamental philosophy of the instructor/participant relationship in adult education is often incompatible.

I sit down and sometimes I'll participate with another teacher but it's clear to me that these guys don't want that. Like what they need is that they need some training in adult education. It would also be nice if they could work as a team but obviously the kind of hierarchy of cook and chef is such that you don't work as a team when you're the master chef. So they've come through that and now they're kind of top dog and they're not going to work as a team with anybody. . . . Now the other part of that though would make it very tricky for him is that I try to have an equal relationship with the students so there's a lot of respect and I see that I have to do some leadership stuff with them, but that I get them to help each other, we talk about stuff, we work things out, we change things, we work it out as kind of a team so I try to be a team member. And maybe I'm not doing them any service by doing that because they walk into the kitchen and [chef] orders them around.

The strongly felt concerns of the basic skills instructors are less apparent to the trades instructors and they are assigned more value in the program without the conscious collaboration. When asked about tension between the two groups, one vocational instructor told me:

I don't find that at all, and I've worked in the office as well. I worked in the office doing other work, like I was a co-ordinator for a program. I wouldn't say that at all. You have some personality conflicts, but that's got nothing to do with the training or the trades or anything else. I have a good rapport with all of them in the office over there, so I really, that's why I can say that's not true.

Taking the two dimensions of subject separation together suggests there is a strong disjuncture at the heart of UTP. On one side lie basic and life skills, featuring weak classification and frequently attempting to create links both inside and outside the organisation. On the other side, the trades subjects are much more concerned with delivering relevant and rigorous training in a strongly classified form. Rather than the social mission being the central justification for the trades education, it is seen as a nice extra if there is time. The vocational components have more power within the organisation because they are able to define themselves as separate and valuable areas of knowledge. Both within and between programs, the trades have set themselves apart from other aspects of employment preparation as the most legitimate and valuable part of the UTP's educational delivery.

The contradiction between the forms of education means that UTP serves two distinct sets of priorities. For the shared basic and lifeskills areas, a holistic approach can be adopted, with emphasis given to the social and developmental aspects of joining the workforce. What matters is that the whole person is prepared for the challenge of moving from the rhythms of unemployed life to those of the workplace. For the specifically vocational areas, the instructional emphasis is all business, and the criteria for evaluating curriculum are concerned with the utility of that knowledge in the workplace. What matters here is that the learner can



shape up to meet the direct demands of employment. Whereas the initial stages of the programs emphasise internal growth, the later stages make it clear that there are specific external demands for participants to meet. The basic skills components are expansive, challenging individuals to see the world in new ways, whereas the vocational components are limiting, making it clear that some knowledge and behaviours are more valuable than others. This difference in approach fundamentally undermines the agency's claims to an integrated curriculum.

While it may be inevitable that a trade union running a program focused on employment emphasises practical, job related training over other aspects of their educational programs, it surprised me that UTP did not act to reduce the barriers between the two instructional groups. Instead, it was as if the agency sought to maintain, or even reinforce, the differences. Vocational instructors, for example, often floated between instruction and program co-ordination, while basic skills instructors did not. Temporary contracts are a great deal more temporary for the basic skills instructors. The status of vocational instructors within their field was referred to several times by administrators with whom I talked, but I never heard positive comments about the skills or experience of basic skills instructors. This finding will be examined once more later in the study.

The increasing separation of programs from each other as they progress through vocational components is not a surprising finding, as both content and process inevitably differ between training for cooking and that for carpentry. The holistic philosophy can hold sway in the early stages of the program, but eventually

specialisation must be recognised, and the curriculum de-integrated. While this may appear to be based on common sense, one implication I would like to highlight is that this pattern suggests we may be all the same on a personal level but the division of people by employment is justified and necessary. While our lives may be built upon a common base, once we reach our place of employment we are different. This is an important message for learners to receive.

I found the devaluation of basic skills education at UTP a matter for some concern. Literacy education has a strong history of dealing with real life, political issues, and a strong body of knowledge and approaches associated with developing critical reflection. This corpus is devalued within UTP, and made into the handservant of the trades instruction. The lack of opportunity for critical teaching of basic skills is inconsistent with the project's claimed holistic philosophy, since the literacy education is reduced to meet the needs of the vocational components, and by extension, the workplace. A strong boundary is erected between learning for life and learning for work, with the greater weight given to the latter. This emphasis results in the potential for the vocational knowledge form to be seen as sacrosanct, above pollution by social or academic concerns. Training can be seen as a neutral means to get jobs for people coming through the program. The strong division between vocational and basic skills helps to make unproblematic reproduction of workplace relations sustainable, a surprising situation for a union project.

Nonetheless, classification by subject appears to be a central organising principle of the institution holding significant implications for staff and

participants. It starts off weaker, reflecting the founders commitment to holistic educational approaches, the limited funding, and the nature of the curriculum. Later in the educational process the divisions between staff, subject areas, and programs become much stronger. The social mission and the holistic emphasis are still present, but they take a back seat to the serious business of preparing participants for the workforce. Among the reasons why this happens is the attitude of trades instructors, who see their role as preparing participants for the workplace as it presently exists. Both the liberal adult education perspective of the basic skills instructors and the holistic perspective of the organisation appear to have had little impact upon the trades instructors, and the trades background of co-ordinators and administrators may make it difficult for them to conceive of a different form of workplace preparation. As it exists, this aspect of UTP's work is one of the strongest mechanisms serving to prevent the transformation of learnfare. Allowing life in a broad sense to be separated from work in a narrow sense helps to render notions of economic individualism and personal deficit into common sense. The holistic vision of the founders is a long way from realisation.

### Administrative And Instructional Staff

The divisions between staff from different subject areas can be considered as a horizontal division, but one of the strongest boundaries I observed was the vertical, hierarchical division between the administrative staff, including the founders and co-ordinators, and the instructional staff. One aspect of this divide is the conditions of employment, with administrative staff treated as permanent

employees and instructors hired on temporary contracts of a few weeks duration. In order to be paid, instructors have to go to the office with a list of their hours and request a cheque to be cut. The flexible nature of instructor employment holds significant benefits for the organisation.

A lot of the instructors are that way so if we start a course and we find it's not meeting the needs we cancel the course. We don't have to be worried about big contracts or pay-outs for our staff because we have to lay them off. All the staff know from the day they start, if we've got training, sure they've got a job. If we do no training they haven't a got a job. There's no tenure whatsoever.

UTP do go out of their way to ensure that the contract conditions for instructors are favourable in order to attract the best possible people. In effect this means that they have to be broadly comparable with the local college system, and some instructors move back and forth between the two systems.

We've got to be competitive. An instructor at [a local technical college], besides only having 24 hours student contact time, although granted he may work 30 hours a week, he's probably closer to \$45 an hour and he's working year round as well. Plus he probably works at the outside seven months a year, he's being paid for twelve with his professional time off, which is about a month a year. With his annual vacation, which an instructor if he's been there for, say 15 or 16 years, they're probably getting 7 or 8 weeks a year annual vacation. Then he's got his stat holidays on that. So our instructors, we want to be competitive and I've said even for three and a half years or whatever, when I first came here they should be on a minimum of \$35 an hour, but the most we could negotiate is \$30. (UTP administrator)

The rate of pay for instructors is finally determined by the funders, who limit the amount of money available for salaries. Despite the state's role in deciding how much the work is worth, one of the most contentious issues during my time at UTP was an "Accord" (College-Institute Educators' Association of BC, 1998) between the

provincial government and the union representing college instructors. The accord was reputed to offer first refusal on employment training contracts to college-based instructors, a development causing great concern to many non-college agencies. Among those concerns was the cost, since college instructors are paid around \$47 an hour, an amount that the funders were unlikely to permit in non-profit organisation budgets. Administrators believed that this would close the programs due to lack of instruction, the present rate of \$30 an hour having been difficult enough to achieve. There was also concern that the province had failed to do the math, and were unaware of the huge increase in cost resulting from the accord.

The accord was awkward for UTP because they did not wish to block the expansion of another union, but saw the flexibility of instructor employment as an essential quality of their programs. The accord did eventually result in a positive outcome, as it was interpreted to mean that private for-profit trainers would be the last to be considered for contracts, and that not-for-profits could be considered as part of the privileged public provision. The BC Federation of Labour passed a resolution to this effect (British Columbia Federation of Labour, 1998) supported by the college instructors' union, and specifically giving the green light to union based training. This resolution allowed UTP to continue their work without worrying about contravening the interests of another labour organisation.

When fulfilling their contracts at UTP instructors have a number of expectations placed upon them, and are closely regulated, with both instructors and administrators using the word "autocratic" to describe the

agency's way of managing instructors. The emphasis upon regulation is interesting because administrators and instructors to a large extent share a perspective upon what makes a good instructor. The explanation provided by one of the instructors summarises the shared notion very well:

First of all, I don't know if I'm a good instructor or not. What I do know is I like what I'm doing, enjoy it, because it forces me to live on the edge. I think a good instructor is someone who can facilitate learning, however it is that it takes place. Who can share their knowledge and their skill in a non-confrontational manner. Somebody who tries to, is open to learn themselves, all the time. A good instructor has to be willing to learn, has to be flexible, has to be able to move through topics quickly if they're not being successful, be willing to let go of it and maybe come back and visit it another time instead of just being out there saying "this is what I have to do, so you've got to get this information now," and who can switch strategies quickly or in midstride, or recognise when something's not working. Somehow or other you have to be able to engage individuals. Each one has to feel like an individual, like they have a separate relationship with you in some way.

As well as technical skills, good instructors have an emotional investment in their teaching. "I think you need a passion for what it is that you're doing. I think you have to have that passion. If you don't have the passion you ought not to be there" (co-ordinator). Basic skills instructors talk about the importance of their work, and believe

. . . that's a lifetime gift that I can give to somebody as an educator, to teach them how to do that in a way that makes them like themselves, or helps them to like themselves rather than dislike themselves as so many do having come through the regular traditional education system where teachers have made them feel dumb. It's the same thing for English skills, you know, for general language skills, for writing skills. If I'm teaching people how to use the language better then, then at the ABE levels, I'm helping people to substantially improve their lives. (instructor)

The temporary and contingent nature of instructor employment is accompanied with strict discipline. If any instructor is not fitting in with the philosophy of the organisation and this leads to concerns on the part of Maclean or MacDermott, the instructor will be disciplined immediately and sometimes fired on the spot. The most important way that administrators learn of problems is through the weekly written evaluations completed by students on Friday afternoons. The evaluation is a single sheet of paper with several questions about how much the participant enjoyed the week, how helpful they found it, and what they thought of the instructor. The sheets are signed by participants, and Maclean told me of occasions where he had talked to a whole class, or an individual, in order to encourage them to write more. He has occasionally called individuals into his office to ask why they hadn't written more about their week.

One administrator told me what happens when a problem arises.

I take the evaluations, I don't use the names, and I sit the instructor down and say "we've had these complaints, this is what's going on, can you improve it?" If it continues I let the person go. I had a computer instructor here that was, he was loyal, he was here all the time but he just wasn't getting it, you know. We kept on trying to say, okay, you got to change it this way to make it more interesting so what did he do, he put games on the computers rather than getting into something that was more interesting. Having games and wandering around and doing nothing. We saw this so I had to let the guy go.

The criteria for unacceptable instructor behaviour can be expressed quite clearly, and there is implicit agreement about a core set of values. The type of behaviour resulting in disciplinary action was summarised by a co-ordinator.

Not be sensitive to the needs of the individual, and . . . some of our clients have got particular needs. We've got to be very cautious, lot of

young people in the class, you've got to be careful how you talk to them sometimes. Any sexist remarks can lead to a dismissal. Anybody taking people down the wrong path to the wrong ends, using the course to further their own ends. To set up an employment agency for example, you know. That one's not happened yet but it could happen.

Nonetheless, instructors are occasionally sceptical about the evaluation of instructors by administrators. Instructors see themselves as having specialised skills not easily folded into broad judgements about whether an individual is politically acceptable to the organisation.

They don't [pause] my take is well is that there's either not the time or not the knowledge of adult education. So they don't know the difference between a good teacher and a lousy teacher and they don't know how to, what to even look for. So they may be getting good instruction, they may not, who knows? (instructor)

Instructors at UTP have got a lot to live up to. The organisation's values demand that they be flexible, committed, passionate, community oriented, and sensitive. The weight given to participant evaluation means that they must also be able build a positive relationship with the students. To be perceived to fail on any of these criteria will result in disciplinary action up to dismissal, and as the last quote suggests, the behavioural expectations are not balanced by clear formal educational expectations. What seems to matter most is that the individual fits with the structure of the organisation and its goals.

At the same time the instructors can also feel as if the work they are trying to do is less important than other events in the project. For example, I was told about the way in which the demands of the co-ordinators' role can conflict with the need of the instructor to create and maintain a consistent student group. "There's



one person in particular, one of the co-ordinators, tends to pop into the classrooms very frequently and interrupt the classroom flow, who just doesn't know that if you do that two or three times and pull students out for conferences, it destroys any possibility of accomplishing the day's objectives." In addition, instructors are very much aware of the irony of being short term workers with a union which bargains for more secure and better paid employment for its members. It is ironic to see an organisation run by people claiming to be social democrats with a strongly humanist philosophy manifesting such a strong sense of hierarchy. One contract instructor commented:

Here it's a little odd because the union is concerned with, with worker well-being and it's certainly all of the principles and ideals are being, are around, built around worker well-being. And yet contract trainers are in a very precarious situation and you know, it seems to fly in the face of what the union professes to believe in.

The strong institutional boundaries between the instructional staff and the administrative staff who employ and evaluate them can be seen in a number of further ways. At the early morning staff meetings, almost all the co-ordinators attend and almost none of the instructors do. These meetings are an important source of information about the direction of the organisation, and the decision not to attend may suggest a certain distance between the instructors and the project. The curriculum for the courses is devised to a large extent by the policy staff at the time of proposal, and instructors have to consult co-ordinators before making significant changes. In these and similar ways the difference between policy staff, as part of

the heart of the organisation, and instructors, as short term employees, is underlined.

While the organisational position of instructors and co-ordinators is significantly different, the functions that they perform in a day's work do overlap. Co-ordinators often get involved in instruction, with one co-ordinator spending time teaching job search skills with each class that passes through the programs they are responsible for. Another co-ordinator tries to divide the job between administration and instruction, and finds that the two roles are not only compatible, but that one improves the other.

But I have certain criteria, roles and responsibilities that I have as an instructor that I have to fulfil and I have another set of roles and responsibilities as a co-ordinator and I need to be able to look after each of those separately but at the same time I have to be aware that I've got those two sets of roles. Those things do overlap.

The common ground between the two roles suggests that the division between instructors and co-ordinators need not be as strong. The practice of stratifying employees by employment conditions, degree of autocratic treatment, and involvement in the work of the organisation, is not necessary to the success of the organisation. It makes a lot of sense to have program co-ordinators teaching in certain components of the program, and similarly the work of vocational and literacy instructors could potentially overlap a great deal more through the development of a truly integrated curriculum. Part of the reason for the division between the layers is a funding structure allowing UTP to develop only contingent commitment to any program, meaning that flexibility in instructor employment is

extremely valuable to the organisation. One implication of this situation is that instructors may not be highly committed to UTP, and also that UTP can afford to be autocratic in its management of instructors. The present situation is an interesting example of staffing categories coming to take on a common sensical life of their own, appearing both obvious and necessary.

The contract employment of instructors at UTP is an example of the way post-industrial perspectives have come to hold sway at the agency. It is accepted that the new economy inevitably requires workers to accept short term, contingent employment, and to submit to disciplinary action on a broad range of criteria. This way of employing people as resources is justified by the imperative for organisational survival and the accompanying need for quick restructuring as contracts change. As one administrator told me, "if anybody can find a solution to the problem of having broad based skills for all the programs we are doing, I would love to have somebody working there permanently but it's not going to happen." However, this argument is becoming weaker over time as basic skills become a standard part of all programs, and UTP would be justified in providing at least one basic skills instructor with similar employment conditions to co-ordinators. The organisation could benefit from the consistency and expertise a permanent instructor brings, yet prefers to maintain the highest possible degree of responsiveness and instructional flexibility. In this way UTP models the world it prepares program participants to enter.

## Ways Of Working Together

The topic of this chapter is how people work together within UTP, and how they are divided by subject area or position. I observed two dimensions of differentiation within the organisation: vertically, between policy and instructional staff, and horizontally, between instructors of different subjects. These two dimensions also intersected to some extent, with vocational instructors more often able to move into policy and co-ordination positions than basic skills instructors. It was suggested to me by one administrator that vocational instructors would be kept within the organisation by being offered co-ordinator positions between program cycles, a phenomenon unknown to basic skills instructors. The overall picture is that fairly strong divisions do exist within UTP.

These divisions form the context for curricular development and delivery within the agency, and impact directly upon the structures of knowledge that prevail. One of the clearest messages implicit in this organisation is that trade skills are extremely valuable while basic skills, though desirable, are subordinate to the attributes needed for work. This division of knowledge strongly contradicts the agency's claims to value a holistic approach to participants and to knowledge. If one area of expertise is seen as more valuable than another, the result of attempted integration will effectively be the colonisation of the less desirable by the more desirable. At UTP this is demonstrated by the basic skills instructors' attempts to become more vocationally focused despite the cost to their own philosophy and area of work. I believe that it would be extremely difficult to achieve an integrated

curriculum within an organisation that treats different knowledge as having different value. On the most basic level, the way instructors interact both demonstrates their varying status and models it to the participants, reinforcing the idea that work matters more than literacy. Curriculum is a product of human relationships, and only if the relationships are relatively equitable will the curriculum follow.

One of the interesting questions raised is why UTP acts to perpetuate these differences, rather than finding a way to develop a more equitable system. The philosophy of the organisation is effectively undermined by its own way of structuring relations between employees, yet it chooses to maintain this arrangement, leading to a continual tension between antithetical commitments to vocation and the development of the person. The espoused philosophy of the organisation supports the idea of personal development as the key to success, but the structures within which this approach is enacted emphasise vocationalism. This is a key disjuncture within the project.

As I tried to understand the contradiction within UTP, two factors had explanatory power for me. The first was that the temporary and strongly regulated form of instructor employment is a strategic decision on the part of the administrators. Cultivation of the UTP philosophy, including their commitment to social mission, is easier to maintain with the smallest possible core group of long term employees. While new people have had to be hired in order to deal with the current number of contracts, it is easier for the founders to hold them at arm's

length and manage them autocratically than to acculturate them to the organisation. One problem with this strategy is it results in modelling an organisation theoretically unacceptable to the social democratic union movement, and another is how easy it becomes to devalue the role of basic skills instructors. While the structure can be justified strategically and administratively, its effects are anti-democratic and unhelpful.

The second factor was a level of distrust of academic instructors within the organisation, manifesting in the comments of trades instructors and in administrators' comments during the discussions about the college instructors' training accord. There is a lack of knowledge about what to expect, explaining the emphasis upon personal rather than professional evaluation of basic skills instructors' work. The caution about literacy instructors may be due to the majority of administrators having little experience with formally academic areas of study, having come up through the ranks of organised labour and the associated pragmatic training provision. The marginalisation of academic staff is unfortunate, since the basic skills instructors told me about experiences as activists for social change that could be excellent resources for the work of UTP as a whole. The attitude to academic instructors may become more positive over time if the union gets involved in workplace literacy and other forms of non-traditional working class education.

As a provider of employment preparation programs interested in doing something different, one of the most important steps UTP could take is to consider how its own organisation plays out in what is taught to participants. The tension

between vocational and humanist emphases is inherent to the nature of the work tackled by the project, but they could minimise the impact by careful use of people and knowledge. In many ways the structure of the organisation is a default response to external demands rather than a creative attempt to innovate. While divisions among people and subjects may well continue to be strong in an alternative approach, the degree to which they currently mimic the relations and values of the trades workplace reduces the potential for transforming learnfare.

### Chapter Review

The way in which people are asked to work together does matter to the education that can finally be delivered. At UTP I discovered that subject areas, and instructors, were attributed quite different degrees of status and credibility in the organisation. Despite the agency's claims of holism in education, subjects directly related to a vocation were treated with more respect and commitment than academic or generic areas. In addition, I perceived the agency to treat specific categories of staff in a differential manner despite claims of a flat structure. At the heart of the UTP organisation is the tension between its espoused centripetal philosophy of equality and the centrifugal and hierarchical nature of its structure. While that tension exists, the project will not attain the degree of integration to which it aspires. To paraphrase Orwell, while all workers are equal, some will remain more equal than others.

## **Chapter 6: Instructional Practices**

The organisation of the project forms a backdrop to the educational process experienced by participants, and in this chapter I will examine the mechanics of this process in more depth. I specifically look at the way content, order and pace, and the criteria for judging the success of the educational process are formed at UTP.

The key question to be addressed is who has control over the educational process, or, in Bernstein's language, how strongly the pedagogy is framed. The philosophy espoused by UTP suggests that there should be a reasonable level of learner control in place, as is consistent with the labour movement objective of empowering workers. This is not to say that individual learners should have a great deal of influence, a form of consumerism, but that the learners as a collective group should be able to participate in shaping the delivery of their employment preparation. This chapter contains a great deal of empirical evidence suggesting the situation at UTP is more complex than this argument suggests.

### **Program Ingredients**

The first determinant of program content is the proposal, a substantial document written in response to a Request for Proposals published by the appropriate funding agency. It provides descriptions of timing, pacing, criteria for success, and content, along with qualifications held by instructors and administrators. An hour-by-hour schedule is included, along with sample lesson



plans and other details of the proposed process, and appendices include job descriptions and an overview of the history of the project. The proposal is the blueprint for the program, and course content features very prominently. In the CABS proposal I reviewed there were 11 pages describing life skills content, 29 pages on basic skills, including overviews of instructional techniques, and 27 pages on cook training. Roughly half of the proposal is specifically dedicated to details of content, compared to 4 pages on the budget. Funders examine the instructional material closely, and it constitutes part of the contract between the agency and the state. If funders visit the program at any time they expect to be shown a set of activities close to what the proposal allocates to that time period. Although the proposal is highly influential in determining what happens with a class of learners, there is also a recognised expectation that flexibility should be encouraged:

In adult education generally you have that freedom to work for the learners so whenever we develop a program we do contract a curriculum. We talk about the curriculum but if you go in the first day and you find that you're going to teach percentages and everybody in that class knows percentages, and I happen to be there, I expect you close the book and you go onto something that they need. You know, you stop and then you go back at night and you take a look at your schedule and your training and you revise it because you've got an element nobody needs. Maybe you're missing an element that they do need. (government project officer)

The proposal is developed by UTP administrators in collaboration with industry advisory groups, bringing union officials and employers into the development process. The involvement of this committee helps to ensure the program is effective and relevant to the current needs of employers in the particular target vocation.

I think what we're trying to do here when we put together our employment training programs, we go out and we find out what skills are required by the end user, which is the person who pays, which is the employer. So we go out and we basically find out what skill sets these people need. Then we develop our training curriculum. (UTP administrator)

Curricular development is based upon a set of instrumental ends defined with the collaboration of employers and union, and lodged within the notion of skills. The material developed is brought together with the project's own philosophy of instruction, as stated in proposal documents:

This is a student-centred flexible curriculum which focuses on empowering the learner. The teacher's role is as a facilitator, helping students to become independent learners. Learning is always kept active and dynamic. It takes into consideration individual learning styles and utilises the student's background knowledge and experience.

These two quotes demonstrate the contradictory nature of curriculum at UTP. On one hand, the aim is to allow students to lead the instructor as active, dynamic, independent learners. On the other, the skills required by the person who pays are paramount. There is a contradiction between instrumental and social ends inscribed into the very beginning of programs, and the existence of topics instructors are simply not permitted to address is one demonstration of the potential for contradiction and the control exerted by program administrators. One such subject is the trade union movement, as UTP administrators believe discussing unionism could be construed as indoctrination and lead to loss of credibility and funding. While the administrators blame this peculiar limitation on the funders, when I mentioned this policy to a government project officer to record the official reaction I was told that the government was happy with projects

explaining their agenda to participants as long as it did not result in exclusion or punishment of those who disagreed. Many feminist and anti-racist employment programs receive funding from the state, and project officers are often delighted with the work they do. A more credible explanation in the case of UTP is that the employers involved in the program development committee do not want unions mentioned. Some instructors find this limitation quite ironic:

Even though these are not union members I want to introduce them to the idea, especially since it's the union, that by forming or getting involved with unions they can get some protection in the work world in which, in which worker benefits are rapidly being eroded. (instructor)

Well, I have been told absolutely that I can't talk about unions and the value of unions. They'll have somebody come in from the [union] and I don't see how you can not talk about unions and do the ABE work. (instructor)

While control of content is largely out of the hands of instructors, and participants also have no formal role, there is sufficient freedom of action in the classroom for different pedagogical approaches to emerge in different parts of the program. As participants move from component to component, and instructor to instructor, the degree to which the learners' knowledge can shape the program changes.

#### Life skills component.

After the intake interviews, the first component participants experience is life skills, delivered by various instructors based on a modular curriculum. Life skills are centred around the management of the self, and the proposal explains that these modules are based on skills identified by the Conference Board of

Canada (cf. 1996) as critical for success, including “critical thinking and problem solving skills, decision making, and positive attitudes.” The proposal continues:

Insight and empowerment through information acquisition and decision making are fundamentals of this curriculum proposal. The method of delivery supports the content. The program format is flexible, functional and fun. Learners learn when they are active and involved. Through opportunities to practice decision-making in both the content and the format of the program, students learn that they are responsible for the quality of their learning, and by extension, the quality of their lives.

One life skills instructor explained the process to me in concrete detail:

We want to take them through a five stage module, first component would be understanding what conflict is all about, and just what their reactions to conflict are, some of the inner knowledge, the inner experiences that they have about conflict, some of the messages they got in their environment growing up, and then we go on to anger, the effects of anger in people's lives and we go through an arousal cycle, explain that to them. And we teach them some anger coping strategies, some maintenance tactics that people can use. Then the third module we would get into feelings, discussing the commonality of feelings, how they're universal, and they come in different degrees. And we teach them some "I" messages, how to be assertive in stating what their feelings are all about. So that's the third component, the fourth component would be communication skills where they would learn paraphrasing and active listening, re-framing, obviously some acknowledging, and we talk about the non-verbals, the non-verbal component of communication being very important, probably 93% of the total communication is through non-verbals. So we teach them that. Finally, the last component is we break down a four stage model of conflict resolution, we teach them the model, and I model it, and then we do some role plays, and more role plays, and more role plays, until they start to internalise it a little bit.

The modular nature of the program and the claimed curricular flexibility do not appear to be compatible. However, one instructor strongly emphasised how important individual approaches were in determining the final delivery of life skills,

and how this re-introduced the flexibility and individuality that could otherwise be lost in a predetermined program.

. . . the individual twist that I put on it would be different from the twist that another staff member would, different from the twist that [another] would put on it. We all have our own stories and our own styles and stuff like that, but the basic information we're trying to get across is very similar.

In lifeskills the content is relatively stable, but the interaction of the instructor and the group is allowed to alter the way it is transmitted. There certainly is some flexibility in such a system, but there is no significant degree of content selection by participants possible in such a strongly framed modular system.

#### Basic skills component.

After life skills, CABS participants move into basic skills, dealing with numeracy and literacy issues. I first joined the CABS program as they went through this change. My fieldnotes reflect the efforts of the basic skills instructor to relate literacy back into social skills, and the surprise I felt about the amount of material they had covered in lifeskills.

The first task for the group was to write a summary about "What was important to you in the last three days," [of lifeskills] and twenty minutes was allocated for this task. One participant showed me the handouts from the lifeskills days. I would estimate 100 pages or so, most of it written in quite high level language considering that the basic skills program hadn't started.

Basic skills instructors try to maintain a balance between the formal curriculum and the real life issues of participants by allowing time for participant

discussion and questioning. While there were clearly areas of knowledge having to be covered, many of them related to cooking, there was also room for exploration of the issues brought up by participants. Instructors would follow the lead of the learners both as a way of recognising the participant's lives and also because they can lead back into the curriculum. In this case, one participant's frustration with the system, brought up during a writing exercise, leads to a discussion of the extent to which people can control their own lives.

[The instructor] explains to me in passing that the free writing is ten minutes of concentration on producing an unedited text. The point is the continual concentration on writing. . . . [participants read their free writing aloud] The next reader starts with "World War 3 has started" and talks about people on crack getting welfare. Again [the instructor] asks probing questions in an attempt to deepen understanding. "Some of them know how to manipulate and use the system", and there are stories about people in welfare offices with cell phones and pagers. [The instructor] suggests that "perhaps what would be more useful . . . would be to make these people invisible in your life and look forward." This is part of the "bigger issue of who you are hanging around with . . ." (fieldnotes)

The atmosphere of the basic skills classroom is often humorous and playful, with learners joking among themselves and with the instructor. Basic skills instructors often allow the humorous interludes to run, and will join in themselves.

This example comes from a basic numeracy session:

Then they move onto conversions, which this calculator has special functions for. In this conversation, [the instructor] drops in that a repeating decimal can be written as 3 with a dot over it, or two threes with a line above them. The first conversion is grams to oz,  $100\text{ g} = 3.5273368\text{ oz}$ . "We'll do some stuff on rounding it off." One person brings up "shelloil" [a calculator game] and [the instructor] replies with "1961." "I know this important stuff too." . . . Various conversions are tried, and then [the instructor] asks what the "MRC" button on the

calculator means. One person suggests that it is "Mostly Really Confused" to a great deal of laughter. (fieldnotes)

When the instructor allows the group to run, either with humour or with a topic they wish to discuss, it is quite often the participants who pull the discussion back to the prescribed curriculum. It is as if participants come into the program with a particular vocational outcome in mind, and resist activities appearing irrelevant to their goal. The basic skills instructor with whom I worked most closely believed strongly that literacy was more than a technical skill, and contained political and cultural dimensions. Creativity and self expression were important to the instructor, but the participants were less convinced of the value of stepping outside knowledge related to cooking.

One of the things that I do is this free writing. Now the first, the welfare group groaned and moaned but they loved it, they did it all the time. The second group won't do it. "What does this have to do with anything?" and if they cannot see how it directly relates to cooking they don't want to do it. . . . I think that it was incredibly useful for them but they didn't see it and they were resistant and at that point I have to say "we'll drop it" cause they didn't want to do it. So I have to come at it another way to sort of get at a broader perspective. They're kicking on the Canadian cultural articles as well, you know, they don't want to do that because they think that they don't get how that fits into cooking. (instructor)

One of the ways this basic skills instructor tried to broaden the discussion was by introducing contemporary materials, such as newspaper accounts of current affairs.

[The instructor] then reads out a summary of a Gillian Guess story from the paper, the reporting being focused mainly on her clothing and only very peripherally on the judge's instructions. [The instructor] asks for the key points of the summary, and gets "the judge's instructions" and "what kind of person GG is." [The instructor] asks "what does her

fashion sense have to do with obstruction of justice?" Some say, well it might, but when [the instructor] asks them to think deeper admit that it is probably irrelevant. [The instructor] emphasises the judge's instructions that defendants are innocent until proven guilty, and some participants find this funny: "You're fucked until proven innocent, excuse my language." (fieldnotes)

The desire to bring broad issues into the basic skills curriculum arose both because of the commitment of this instructor to literacy as a way to empower learners, and because of the traditions of basic skills education. For several centuries learning to read and write has meant learning to look at the world (cf. Kelly, 1992), and over the last thirty years more political views of working with words have been developed (cf. Freire, 1972). However, the attempts of the instructor to use literacy instruction in this manner were limited from two angles. The first was the need to cover the numeracy and literacy abilities required to work effectively in a kitchen, and the second was the participants' desire to maintain a strong focus on vocationally relevant knowledge. These influences tended to emphasise the value of trades knowledge and diminish that of everyday knowledge, leaving the instructor with few options but adherence to the official curriculum.

While literacy has a history of using knowledge learners can relate to, computer skills has not yet developed such a tradition. I spent some time in the computer skills classroom, and found that the approach to the content was similar, with the instructor working hard to engage participants in the production of knowledge.

When I joined them [the instructor] was teaching "tabs" to a small group of participants, while 6 were working on their own. One young man was coaching an older woman on the use of the internet. One



participant turns to me to ask for help with the internet. His machine has crashed and the screen gone blank. I ask what he was looking for, and he says “bomb recipes.” He’s got some tips, but claims it is hard to find specific ingredients. They would be safe for him to know because he has worked with explosives before, on a seismic crew. I do what I can, but the machine is not happy, and I restart it. The young man is now helping somebody else. A participant shows me his recipe for elephant stew, which includes a small picture of an elephant. It is a funny recipe, including lines like “Cut elephant into bite size pieces. This takes two months.” One participant is on a chat channel, talking to some folk from the US. [The instructor] demonstrates an internet search, using “Harley-Davidson” as the search term. (fieldnotes)

The basic skills instructors work hard to make material flexible, interesting, and meaningful to the participants. In doing so, they try to avoid making judgements about the way participants deal with topics, such as the inherently violent interests in the above example. The instructors I interviewed tried to ameliorate these interests and add meaning to the curriculum by bringing up political issues whenever possible, usually disguised so that they would not be reprimanded.

Now in terms of working from where they're coming from, I try not to do yellow jellybean, red jellybean math. I try to do how much, how long do you have to work at a low paying job at McDonalds in order to buy a Ferrari. (instructor)

Basic skills instructors believe that by restricting the political content of education at UTP, and by creating an instructor led pedagogy, the project is ignoring a vital area of work. The ban on discussing unions, for example, does strike them as ridiculous, and they feel that by not engaging in discussion of the “whys” of work, UTP are neglecting an important component of the social democrat agenda. My fieldnotes reflect how valuable even short periods of discussion about

contentious issues can be for participants, if they are given permission to step outside vocationalism and become involved. The extract refers to a discussion on the structure of Canadian government and the Federal/Provincial division of powers:

Earlier in the morning I had a chat with [the instructor] who had told me that it was a pity that I had missed a session last week where the class had discussed politics. One participant had stated that the session, some thirty minutes long, had been the most useful contribution to her political education ever. (fieldnotes)

The process of content selection during the basic skills components is relatively open, with the most significant limitations being the discomfort of the organisation regarding overtly political topics. Participants can change the content and are able to determine to some degree what they consider to be valuable. In Bernstein's terms, this constitutes weaker framing of curricular content, with the locus of control more towards the learner than the instructor. Ironically, the fact that learners can push the instructor towards topics they perceive to be more vocationally relevant is an indication of the freedom they enjoy. In this case, they exercise it to resist the cultural and critical aspects of education for employment, and to maintain a focus on the instrumental.

There are two ways of thinking about the resistance of participants to the broadening of the curricular content. One perspective suggests the unwillingness of working class students to engage with forms of knowledge they perceive as middle class simply helps to keep them in subordinate positions. By using the looser framing of basic skills content to ensure that the knowledge imparted has vocational value learners are, in a sense, shooting themselves in the foot (cf. Willis,

1977), and yet that refusal is one of the few forms of educational power they possess. Another way of looking at the process is to argue that the learners are choosing to erect and maintain a strong barrier between themselves and the educational content of the program. Far from losing out, by limiting the amount of their own experience brought into the program they gain a degree of control over that experience, leaving their lifeworld free from the colonisation of the educational system (cf. Welton, 1995).

In either case, the more important aspect may be that for possibly the first time in their lives learners are able to change what they are being taught. The exercise of control entailed may be one of the most significant lessons learned during the basic skills component of UTP programs. While instructors remain committed to literacy education as a tool of empowerment, the ability of participants to choose to see basic skills as tools for their vocation is more empowering on a pragmatic level.

#### Vocational skills component.

As participants move into the vocational component of the programs, control over content shifts to the instructors. One example of this is the change from an informal set of objectives to a detailed curriculum laid out in the “Manual of professional cook training” (Bateman & Brown, 1992). This manual is 483 pages long, with 40 chapters covering types of food, their preparation and service, as well as nutrition and food service operations. The longest chapter is “Elementary management procedures,” pp. 75-156. This section spends considerable time looking

at purchasing, yield, portion control, menu planning, common menu mistakes, details of food cost, staff meetings, and building morale. The manual lacks references to organic foods, or to vegetarian or vegan diets. The emphases and omissions of the manual become those of the program, suggesting the valid construction of a professional cook to be an ambitious, management minded individual cooking for carnivores.

When asked what made the program successful, one instructor referred me back to this manual. "There's no real secret, it's the same program we used to teach at [a local college], and the program is excellent. If there's any secret it's in the program itself." "As far as the curriculum goes, we're flexible to a point depending on the calibre of students that we have, and the general curriculum I wouldn't change one bit." Lack of negotiability in the curriculum is justified because the manual has been developed from the pragmatic skills used by working cooks.

In the last 25 years, our style of cooking hasn't really changed that much, and the basics are still there. It's like building a house, you still use 2x4's to do your framing. Well, it's the same with cooking. Once you've got your basics, and then we put them, place them in the various operations, the chef isn't too concerned about their skills at that point, he's more interested in their work ethic, and if they have the basics, and then he can teach them the way he wants to train them from there. Those particular manuals, [the author has] updated them three or four times, but all the basic stuff is still there. And it should stay there too, because it's very important. Too many people figure they can do without the basics, but you can't build a house without a foundation. (instructor)

It was fascinating to watch the chef instructor work with the program participants in the same setting as basic skills. The atmosphere of the classroom was appreciably more formal, and the degree of control by the instructor higher. In

this case, the instructor was teaching basic knife skills, and began by talking about types of knife. The violent sexism of the quote will be addressed in the next chapter, and the focus here is the control the instructor exerts.

[The instructor] ends the discussion by saying "I forgot to ask [the coordinator] if she has any Band-Aid today" which gets a laugh. He adds that the most important thing is attitude. [The instructor] hands out a sheet with knife sharpening instructions on it, and walks out of the room, returning in a few seconds with a handful of Band-Aids. "In all of our recipes there is no call for human blood". He passes out black vinyl bags containing a small set of knives- a French blade, a filleting knife, a peeler, a fruit knife, and a steel. He picks up one French and a steel and starts to describe the sharpening process, beginning with the correct way to hold the steel. The knife should be grasped "as if it were an ex-wife". He shows the stroke slowly and then speeds up to full chef speed, which is pretty fast. He invites the participants to have a go with their own set. These sets of knives are identical to the ones that participants will have to buy later in the program at a cost of \$150. [The instructor] walks around watching the participants and corrects a few, saying "it's my way or no way". The first lesson in cooking is that "the chef is always right, even when he's wrong." (fieldnotes)

Once participants reach the kitchen, they are divided into four groups corresponding to four stations: hot food, salads, soups and stocks, and baking. While in the kitchen each group cycles through each station twice, for a week each time. The menus are designed to provide work for each group corresponding to a chapter of the cook manual. One day the "special" menu was

#1 Filet of Cod St. Germaine  
Grilled Cod served with Béarnaise sauce  
Whipped potato and nutmeg  
Fresh seasonal vegetables  
Mexican coleslaw  
Hot biscuit and butter  
Your choice of dessert

#2 Pork cutlet Milanaise

Breaded pork cutlet, grilled and served with a garnish of ham and mushrooms in a red wine sauce

Columbine potatoes

Fresh seasonal vegetables

Caesar salad

Hot biscuit and butter

Your choice of dessert

Soups of the day: Boston clam chowder, Beef noodle

In this case, the group working in the hot area were learning about fish, pork, and various vegetables. The salad group were learning Caesar salad and Mexican coleslaw, including making dressings from scratch, and the soup and stock group were covering chowder, beef noodle soup, and red wine and Béarnaise sauces. The bakers made biscuits and a number of desserts, including cheesecake. The activities of the participants were strongly linked into the content of the cook manual, itself based on the skills needed for workplace success.

The trades experience of instructors is explicitly referred to on many occasions, and is used as both justification and final court of appeal around content. Once again, the vocational credibility of instructors is an important element in the control they exercise over the program. However, anecdotal approaches to instruction can frame complex issues in a pragmatic manner, and make them sound like unproblematic common sense. One example of this was an instructor who told the class that when working as a parts supplier, one of the tricks of the trade is to conceal the source of parts from the customer so that they could not cut out the middle person and go directly to the manufacturer to save money. At the time I was struck by the interesting avenues of discussion potentially open to the class, but the

instructor chose to present the story without further exploration. However, many participants appeared to be happy with the current curricular form, as their general comments showed they saw themselves as getting useful and valuable knowledge from experts.

The strong framing of content in vocational components, with control lying with the instructor, is justified on the basis of pragmatism. There is a lot of material to cover, and if an expert is employed they should be allowed to run the program as they wish. In addition, the hierarchical structure, both in terms of knowledge value and relative status of learners and instructors, does accurately reflect the experience of working in a kitchen. What tends to be de-emphasised by this structure is the experience and ideas of the participants, particularly around ways the kitchen could be organised differently. This could be seen as a good thing, in that it allows participants to create a strong boundary between work and personal life, something lacking during a period of unemployment, but it must also be acknowledged that such a boundary contradicts the agency's holistic philosophy. I do not wish to suggest that either weaker or stronger framing of content is inherently more valuable, but merely to highlight a disjuncture between UTP's espoused philosophy and the enacted form of the curriculum arising particularly strongly from the trades background of vocational instructors.

### Chronology Matters

There is a lot of material to be covered in a program like CABS, but there is also a limited amount of time. How long can be devoted to any one topic and the

order those topics are tackled is finally determined by the length of the program and the material to be covered. Most instructors I interviewed stated that there simply was not enough time to cover subject areas in the depth they would like. Where time is a limited resource, managing the pace and order of the classroom becomes an important role for the instructor, resulting in a generally stronger frame being placed around these elements of practice.

One of the ways instructors make decisions about timing is to look at the speed at which the participants are grasping material and trying to create a balance satisfying the majority of the learners.

Some of the students can grasp everything at a fast level, and a good percentage of the students cannot, and it depends how much schooling the students have had. Well, there's a basic curriculum that I follow, and what dictates how fast I go through is the actual pace of the students. I take the majority of the class level. I try to get through everything in every class and I usually do, but some grasp parts of it and some of them don't because they don't want to study and they're not that interested in the theory, they just want to work in the kitchen.  
(instructor)

Instructors emphasise the importance of flexibility in order and pacing, but this is limited by the need to maintain a smooth flow of instruction.

I think that's one of the things that all of the instructors have is the flexibility to be able to go from one piece of their curriculum to another without interrupting the flow . . . I have certain things that I want them to know at the end of two weeks and as long as I can reach those outcomes it doesn't matter what order I reach them in because it's not, it's not sort of oriented towards completing something or a set.  
(instructor)

Participants have strong views on the speed and order of learning. A group of participants from the introductory apprenticeship program told me how hard it was



to go backwards and forwards between work experience and the classroom. They would much rather do all the classroom stuff at the beginning and then move out into the field, which is the way the CARS and CABS programs are designed.

Participants are not consulted in the design of the sampler programs, however, and their format makes sense from the perspective of efficient use of instructor time.

Occasionally learners can at least ensure that schedules are followed, and my fieldnotes reflect the ways in which participants would inform the instructor that it was time for a break. "By 11:56 people were conspicuously getting keys out, and by 11:57 putting jackets on. We split for lunch at 11:58."

Instructors sometimes decide to ignore the pressure from the program structure and allocate time to activities they see as important.

So what I do is I spend an hour, hour and a half reviewing in the afternoon what happened in the morning and actually help them focus on what to study because they just don't know and then I can do a review of the week as well because they need to sort of pull it all together and what's happened is they can have a little bit of down time and do some reflection on it and stuff. Again I would think that the union wouldn't find that that important but I've sort of insisted that the students, cause they're engaging in real big changes in their lives, for some of them, especially the welfare people, they need lots of reflection time. (instructor)

While instructors shape, and react to, the overarching timeframe for programs, the needs and wishes of participants influence the day to day delivery. There is a working balance between the organisation and the individuals involved in instruction, as instructors or learners. In terms of frame strength, pace and order of instruction appear to be both weakly and strongly framed depending on the level

examined. The most important element of stronger framing is the need to cover material.

And I will very often, I'll come into the classroom with something in mind, not a structured lesson plan but an idea about what I want to cover and I'll try it with them and if we're not getting anywhere with it then I say "okay fine, we'll do something else instead" and we'll just change that around. And if it's something I must cover then I'll come back to it at a later date. And in that case, and if they're still resistant to it then I simply say "this is part of what we have to cover so this is where we're going to do it," you know. (instructor)

In the vocational components a further element of strong framing is the need to produce dozens of meals by 5 p.m., dictating the pace of work throughout the day and the order of instruction. If the preplanned menu calls for cheesecake, the people responsible have to be shown how to produce Graham crumbs. This applies to various menu items for all four of the kitchen groups. In this way, the work experience resembles a commercial kitchen, even though the pace is a great deal slower.

The most useful way to think of pace and order of instruction is that the instructors try to manage and mediate a series of time demands on the participants, many of which are produced by external factors. Instructors retain control to a high degree, but the demands they pass on to students originate either at the administrative level, as with the length of the program, or in the workplace standard, as with the speed of work. The instructors view themselves as having little opportunity to change the timing of training, though they will try to pass on as much flexibility as possible to the students. The degree of flexibility, and the importance assigned to it, varies once more between basic skills and vocational

areas, with literacy instructors more concerned to allow participants to exercise control.

### Successful Instruction

One important aspect of instruction is what counts as successful teaching. At UTP there are two main indicators of success. The first is whether the program is meeting funder expectations, both in terms of outcomes and process. The single most important criterion for work preparation programs is the placement rate, how many participants succeed in attaining and maintaining employment. Because of the complexity of the criteria it is difficult to find out the specific rate of success the funders expect, though UTP has little to worry about. Ninety per cent of participants finishing their food preparation programs find work, and limited follow up suggests that 80% are still employed a year later. In discussions with funders it soon becomes clear that while the placement rate has to be kept high to justify funding, there are other, more informal, criteria taken into account:

Well, I look at whether that employment is going to be employment that will assist the individual in meeting their own intrinsic/extrinsic needs. Can be used as a stepping stone, and won't result in a person feeling they're compelled to take a job only to sabotage it two weeks down the road, and they're angry now because they feel that something has been done to them in spite of them, it hasn't been done with them and for them. I try to look at the whole individual. "What's his self-esteem when he came here? What employment barriers did he present, and how was he helped in becoming aware of those issues, and in dealing with those issues?" So you look at the range of maturity of the individual and try to determine has he gained some insight into how he's contributed to his own behaviour and where he was at, and how he has been empowered to deal with the present circumstances, and how that can be applied when he leaves the program? And that that support is there for him, again, after he leaves the program, cause

that's also important. And that's where some contractors excel where others don't. (government project officer)

One of the criteria explained to me by a government funder was that the educational components should have clearly demonstrable outcomes attached to them, and these should be achieved. The objective of a lifeskills component on conflict is cited in one proposal as “to become aware of the cause and effects of conflict, and to explore the methods of managing and defusing the escalation of confrontational situations.” The means of assessing this outcome is not explained in the document, and its acceptance by funders suggests a quasi-functional approach to outcomes is adopted rather than a fully developed competency based scheme. The funders look at the proposed outcomes in some detail, nonetheless:

You look at the educational material that is being presented, and what is the concept that is being taught here, and how is it being taught, and what are the measurable and observable outcomes? I mean cause you know you can get courses that are put together that provide you with a curriculum and then there is the instructor's manual, okay, and it tells you after this particular module of instruction the client will be able to do x, y, z. This is the concept, and this is what he should be able to do if he's mastered it, before he can move onto the next level. And we're impressed, we'll ask for that, we'll ask for sample lesson plans, we will look at the curriculum and look at the measured outcomes that are demonstrated in that curriculum. (government project officer)

A further internal criterion of success for the CABS program is how many of the participants pass the Provincial Chef Apprenticeship Level 1 exam at the end. Success in this exam means that students have a qualification equivalent to having completed the first year of apprenticeship, an enormous step up for people dealing with long term unemployment. The pass rate is consistently good for UTP

participants, who then have a concrete qualification, unusual for employment preparation programs.

The role of the evaluation conducted by funders is to determine that curricular knowledge selection and delivery is appropriate to policy aims. It is interesting that funders look at the behaviour of individuals as a way to judge the worth of the program, and in many ways the line between the selection of knowledge and the efficacy of transmission of that knowledge is blurred. The core assumption of employment preparation programs, that if unemployed people are given the right information in the correct manner they will turn into valuable and motivated employees, is the fundamental basis for assessment of the programs. There is a shared belief that correctly delivering the right training will necessarily lead participants to employment. If the chain were to break down, however, the current funder evaluation would not help to provide an educational remedy, being mainly interested in ensuring clean implementation of policy imperatives.

The second aspect of evaluation is assessment of the participants by the instructors. At UTP assessment takes a variety of forms, which range from informal personal judgement to formal paper and pencil testing. One instructor told me about informal evaluation of participants in life skills components, and how it influences teaching style:

I've been at this so long now I can just see it in their faces, I can see when I'm getting through to them by the rapport between the clients and myself, sometimes for me to leave on my lunch or even on a break they don't let me out of the room, there's always questions. So you get to gauge by their reaction, how much they participate, if I ask a question do they have the answer, and if they have the answer then

they're paying attention most of the time. Yeah, I can just really start to gauge that kind of stuff, you know, I've got about 5000 hours of group time. They give you an idea of what's working and what's not working. (instructor)

Through life skills the important point is that students demonstrate engagement with the material covered, however the instructor perceives that engagement. Participation and appropriate responses are important indicators of that engagement. In the basic skills component, instructors have more specific expectations of participants:

The outcomes for me are to upgrade anyone who needs it to grade 11, in terms of the ABE. To prove, to make sure that everyone who comes through computer training can at least put together a resume, a covering letter, knows what a resume and covering letter is, can use the Internet for doing job search, has some idea of how to actually find what they're looking for, knows where the HRDC sites are. [pause] And can print that information and make it available for them. What else? And hopefully will have had some experience with spreadsheets so that they can calculate the money that they've actually earned once they go out on the job. (instructor)

In both basic and life skills the criteria for successful transmission of knowledge are focused on application rather than theoretical skills. The learner is able to participate in the evaluative process to some extent by choosing their own means of demonstrating that they have paid attention to the instruction. The evaluation of whether a particular ability— such as conflict management— has been learned is a joint endeavour of participant and instructor. Together they have to examine what the particular ability means to the participant, and how it manifests in relatively informal aspects of behaviour. When participants enter vocational training, formal testing of skills becomes much more important. My fieldnotes

contain a description of one of the cook theory exams participants have to sit and pass each week.

The participants were sitting on benches outside the dining room, shaded from the sun, working on a test. [The instructor] was standing over them, and acknowledged me as I arrived. The test had many questions, and covered all the theory to date. I asked one participant later what had been on the test and he said that he didn't remember half of it, it was bullshit about soups and stocks, seafood, food percentages, food cost, and yield. The participants are sitting spread out to prevent comparison of answers, and the overall impression is very school like.

In addition to the weekly tests the CABS program has a final exam, counting for credit towards the first year of apprenticeship. Many participants were concerned about this exam, and the weekly tests, before they had even entered the kitchen. Here an instructor is presenting information on testing during the vocational phase to a class of participants still working on basic skills:

There are some questions about the final exams raised. After the kitchen experience the participants return to the classroom for a refresher on cooking theory which lasts two days, and then a one day exam. The final mark is based on various elements. During the program there are tests, and the scores are factored in. If a test is missed the score is zero whatever the excuse. Another element is the participants' attitudes. Each day [the chef instructor] goes home and goes through the list of names in the class and assigns a mark based on attitude. The final compiled marks cover the theory section and the practicum separately. One participant asks if the work they are doing with [the basic skills instructor] counts towards the marks, and [the chef instructor] says that they do not. (fieldnotes)

As suggested by the reference to attitude in the extract, informal assessment of personal attributes remains important throughout the program. In the end, a combination of perceived skills and attitudes justifies the type of work experience and employment given to participants, and how successful instructors consider

them to be. It is worth noting the aggressive language used in this quote, indicative of the macho atmosphere I discuss in the following chapter.

The best students usually go to the better hotels, the poorer students, they go to the diners. I don't like to send anybody to a fast food operation because they don't go through a program like this to go to a fast food operation. First of all I ask them what their expectations are, and they usually know themselves by that time, what they can handle, and a student that's at the bottom end of the class will not ask for [a prestigious hotel]. The odd one will, but basically they know that it's out of their league. The ones that do, they're usually capable of handling it. But there's more than just skills involved, because there's personalities involved. Somebody has an extreme personality, the chef isn't going to put up with them. So I don't care how good a cook he is, that has to go. So I try to knock that out of him in this program, explain to them "hey, this isn't going to wash". So then they seem to grow out of it, even in the short period of time that we got them.  
(instructor)

Evaluation has several layers at UTP. The programs are assessed by funders, who examine both the curriculum and the effectiveness of that program in bringing about behavioural change. During life and basic skills participants are evaluated on a weakly framed basis looking at their engagement with the information given and their response to it. Participants must participate in this evaluation because it concerns their personal and social abilities, and they must choose to display any changes to the instructor. During the cooking component, the more personal forms of assessment are augmented with a strongly framed formal system examining the learner's grasp of theoretical knowledge. Evaluation has become intensified to the point of surveillance, with the learner expected to know the right things, be the right kind of person, and demonstrate their knowledge in the right way. The ability of participants to evaluate instructors at the end of each week is overwhelmed by



the pervasive and personal assessment systems monitoring the learners. For participants to have an impact upon instructional practices requires both collective effort, in that several students would have to complain, and the willingness of administrators to act upon complaints. This is a far cry from the continual demonstration of knowledge and commitment expected of the learner.

### Chapter Review

In this chapter I have examined the instructional practices at UTP. These practices manifest the same tensions as the organisational form and the placement of a union within labour market training. On one hand lie the non-vocational elements of the program, interested in opening up the curriculum, allowing participants to contribute to the organisation of the program, and applying a loosely framed form of evaluation. On the other lie the vocational instructors, with a very clear idea of what they will teach, how, and when, as well as clearly defined formal evaluation mechanisms. Neither approach is intrinsically better, but the disjuncture between the two is a matter for some concern, and it becomes difficult to maintain the holistic philosophy of UTP in the face of inconsistent practices. Ironically, one of the few aspects able to claim a degree of holism is evaluation, taking into account both the demonstrated abilities and personal traits of the individuals passing through the program.

This chapter highlights the necessity to consider wider influences in order to understand the nuances of control over the transmission of knowledge. It is not possible to consider how content is selected, for example, without knowing how the

status of instructors varies, and how the political philosophy underlying learnfare privileges concrete employment outcomes. While individual choices made by instructors do help to shape the final form of education, they also can be exercised in relatively few aspects of the curriculum. Participants have limited control over the instructional practices at UTP, and instructors have very little more, since the pedagogy derives with such apparent logic from external constraints and considerations. Overall, UTP is an educational setting where the curriculum is highly consistent with the social and political context of its work in learnfare. Some practices, such as the details of curriculum required by funders, strengthen these links directly, while others, such as the acceptance of the Conference Board's description of workplace skills, are less direct. Overall, the effect is to close the options available to the project within that funding and policy structure.

The possibility of doing things differently at UTP is mainly represented by the basic skills components, where control over educational process is more open than the later vocational stages. Here the participants can influence the direction and form of the program, and allow their own interests to emerge. The way this control is exercised to resist exploration of their lives is an interesting finding oddly inconsistent with some of the assumptions underpinning andragogical or liberatory approaches to literacy education. Resistance is used to ensure that the structures of the workplace are reproduced in the curriculum, with participants giving the appearance of knowing what they are in the program to obtain, and being determined to get it. This objective is not only a limit on the education at UTP, it

also requires them to accept a number of judgements about who they are, and how their diversity will be valued. I address this issue in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 7: Dealing With Diversity**

Diversity of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class is a fundamental dynamic of educational settings, and there are many ways to deal with it. At some point the institution, or the instructor, has to decide how much attention should be paid to the effect this dynamic has upon interaction and the final outcomes of the program. Diversity can be ignored, as has traditionally been the case in higher education, or it can be brought into the curriculum for explicit discussion. In between these two extremes lie options such as recognising diversity on specific occasions, or only acknowledging particular forms. Whatever approach is chosen, diversity has important implications for the way the educational process approaches learners, and the forms of knowledge seen as valuable or even useful to know.

UTP has decided to deal with diversity by creating a set of rules designed to control the manifestation of these issues in its educational programs. In accord with the agency's liberal humanist approach there is an attempt to treat everybody the same regardless of who they are, and to ensure that explicit discrimination leads to negative sanctions. Individuals working with UTP, whether instructors or learners, are told that any observed prejudicial behaviour will be treated severely, with loss of job or training opportunity among the possible outcomes. While this policy may reduce the number of explicitly biased comments and jokes, it is not sufficient, serving to mask the importance of diversity and specific dimensions of difference in the project's programs. I found two forms of difference manifest strongly at UTP, the first being the funding source for learners' participation. Individuals funded by

Employment Insurance are viewed as being far more competent and well educated than those funded by Social Assistance programs. The second manifestation concerns gender, with UTP showing itself to be a highly masculine context where sexism goes unnoticed, and astute readers will have noticed the sexist language of many of the quotes in the last few chapters. These two examples suggest that the project's attempts to make difference go away by claiming they will not tolerate certain behaviours does not make diversity less important, but merely less visible.

### Denying Difference

The prevention of discrimination is an extremely important principle for UTP, one they attempt to apply consistently. The organisation is strongly dedicated to a policy of eradicating discrimination within programs and, as much as possible, within participants. Both instructors and participants are carefully monitored for any comments that indicate prejudicial attitudes on grounds of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. Employees can be, and have been, fired because of statements or jokes discriminating against one group or another. I was told about one male instructor who kept making homophobic slurs in his classes, refused to change his behaviour, and lost his job.

There are a number of ways to deal with issues of diversity, and the strategy chosen at UTP is to focus on sameness while disallowing reference to difference. In essence, a set of formal rules has been created to ensure that consequences are attached to inappropriate forms of behaviour. One interesting example of this approach is the decision to remove discussion of unionism from the curriculum, as I

discussed in chapter 6. The emphasis is firmly placed on the commonalities between workers and employers as joint participants in economic endeavours. The emphasis on sameness fits with UTP's holistic approach to individuals and community, and does help to create a shared culture at the agency.

However, one effect of the policy is to discourage exploration of what diversity means to people involved with UTP, with little incentive to discuss why difference matters beyond what is necessary to justify the rules already in place. The resolution of the issue is pre-determined by the agency rather than being open for consideration. Most instructors at UTP do not address the complexities of institutional and individual discrimination beyond commenting on examples and enforcing the project's regulations. It is interesting that female instructors believe they deal with the issue more fully than their male counterparts:

There are some things that are not acceptable and sexism, racism and any of the isms, those are not acceptable in a classroom but as a topic for discussion [we have] to remain open-minded about it. And I think that that doesn't happen in a lot of male dominated sort of areas where there's only a male instructor with men. That they would never go near those topics at all. (instructor)

My observations support this comment, and I saw a female basic skills instructor attempt to open discussion of discrimination on several occasions. She wanted to deal with a joking homophobic comment made earlier in the morning, and introduced the topic by saying "if you're going to be working in hospitality you're going to be working with a lot of gays and lesbians." Of all jobs, "hospitality has the highest ratio, so its really important that you don't make sexist or homophobic comments." The instructor wrote on the board:

homophobic - phobia is a fear

The instructor added “what I find about comments and jokes is that they tend to single out a group of people and then make fun of them.” The group, made up of men and women, did not want to discuss the topic any further, and pulled the instructor back to more pragmatic subjects. As an observer I became aware of a cultural divide between the well-meaning instructor and the participants, and was reminded of an elementary teacher explaining to a class that it was “not nice to pick on little Johnny.” I understood the withdrawal of the participants as a reaction to a self-righteous tone in the instructor’s voice, and while I supported the instructor’s attempts to engage the class I could see why they might choose not to put their own feelings out for discussion when the correct response was clearly pre-determined. This group of participants certainly appeared to be more comfortable with the organisation’s rule centred way of dealing with the topic, where what matters is observable behaviour rather than personal belief. Where rules are in place the issues become very clear and engagement with the complexities of discrimination, and everybody’s contribution to perpetuating them, is not necessary.

One of the less positive effects of de-emphasising difference is that participants often do not notice or reflect upon its importance. Racism is considered completely unacceptable by the organisation, but this does not manifest in a positive drive to be aware of ethnicity as an issue. In one observation session I watched a group of young white men roll their eyes and snigger as a young East Indian man read out a recipe in an accent so thick it was hard for me to follow.

Because the behaviour of the white participants was not verbal it was not challenged in the classroom. A similar example of the way UTP's policies can produce identity blindness was when I asked the participants what they could tell me about the instructors we met during a tour of a local college. They told me that they were very firm, helpful, funny, experienced, and respected. I asked more about them, and only after some prompting did somebody realise that of the 12-15 we had seen only 2 were not older white men. This was not seen as particularly significant.

The argument underpinning UTP's rule centred approach to diversity is that everybody is essentially the same and difference unimportant, reflecting not only the organisation's own liberal humanist approach but also the neo-liberal political and economic context of employment preparation itself. By denying that identity matters, UTP obscures a range of structured meanings and inequalities that demonstrably affect people's lives. Individuals are seen as operating freely, untrammelled by barriers other than their perception of themselves and what they can achieve. By privileging sameness over difference, UTP effectively denies the collective dimensions of participants lives, and the ways people's identity affects their relation to wider society. The emphasis on the free actor is strangely similar to the neo-liberal view of workers I discussed in chapter 3.

The project's way of thinking about diversity is all the more interesting in that funders provide explicit equity requirements for the programs, potentially highlighting the identity of participants. The intention is presumably to encourage contractors to think about their recruitment and selection methods, and make them



address any systemic ethnic or gender bias. Though these requirements will vary from program to program, and with different project officers, a typical MAETT program will specify that each class will include 50% women, 10% people with disabilities, 15% visible minorities, and 10% First Nations people. Similarly, a HRDC program will expect 50% women, 10% people with disabilities, and 10% First Nations people. One administrator told me that in the first years of the agency they had tried incredibly hard to ensure that each group going through the program had exactly the right balance, but the agency has now relaxed about it. In the history of the organisation there has never been any problems with meeting the equity numbers, and usually the program has more members of each group than necessary to meet requirements. As they audit participation each year, administrators find the equity requirements are being met over the longer term simply because the suggested numbers are very close to population levels of each group. UTP does also have an opportunity to affect the requirements during contract negotiation, with most project officers asking “is there anything you’d like to see in that?”

One of the factors allowing a relatively loose approach to recruitment and completion by representatives of minority groups is the lack of consequences for not meeting equity criteria. An administrator pointed out to me that although equity requirements are written into contracts, they are not monitored by the funders, who appear to be concerned only with the percentage of participants who leave public support at the end of the program. This permits UTP to be identity blind, trusting to demographics to ensure that over time the numbers are close enough to those

contracted to recognise the equity concerns of funders. The system is seen as effective for all involved, with minorities receiving the service to which they are entitled while UTP administrators can maintain their own liberal philosophy and avoid the need for proactive recruitment of minority participants.

During my time at UTP I observed several occasions where discriminatory statements were made. Of those I saw, the majority were derived from staff rather than participants, and many were serious enough, in my opinion, to undermine the project's claim to be dealing with difference and discrimination. Possibly the most worrying was the vocational instructor's comment about holding the knife "like an ex-wife," conflating sexism and an undertone of violence, but this was unfortunately not unique. There was very little discussion of the viability of simply viewing everybody as the same, or even engagement with pragmatic manifestations of the gendered workplace such as the dominance of men in high status cooking positions. My concern with UTP's perspective on identity is that suppressing overt reference to difference can mask the importance of diversity in our social and working lives and can make it hard to challenge discrimination when it does arise. Changing the manifestation of difference requires individuals to have a more robust critique than "it is not nice to discriminate," and a coerced obedience to a set of rules developed by the founders.

Despite the claims of the administrators to be blind to identity, who you are does matter at UTP, and I observed two particularly strong and concrete manifestations of the way this subtle concern is built into the form and process of

the organisation. In the next two sections I argue that the experience of going through a UTP program, or working for the organisation, depends on where participants get their income support from, and gender.

### Employment Insurance Claimant or Social Assistance Recipient?

UTP contracts services to both the provincial and federal ministries responsible for providing training to unemployed people. As mentioned in chapter 4 this divide has now been collapsed, but at the time of the fieldwork in UTP it mattered a great deal where funding for individuals and for programs was derived from. At that time either MAETT or HRDC would pay for a complete program cycle, and then allow the other government to participate at cost. The design of the programs would reflect the nature of the group seen as the dominant participants. A MAETT sponsored program would be designed with a heavy literacy component to recognise the lower educational attainment of welfare recipients, while an EI program curriculum could take for granted that participants would have been working recently, and be better educated. The most significant difference between CABS and CARS programs is that the latter has far less basic skills and more management content. The variance is explained to a large extent by the origins of the CABS program in MAETT sponsored provision for welfare recipients, and the CARS focus on EI claimants.

As the summer of 1999 approached, it became more common to have programs serving both participant groups. The CABS program I observed was sponsored by HRDC, with several of the seats purchased, at substantial cost, by the

provincial ministry. This was seen as a good way to do business because the EI participants would pull the standards of the group up, in terms of behaviour and academics, and increase the attainment of the welfare participants. However, different perceptions of EI and welfare recipients lead to dissimilar expectations for academic and personal achievement, making management of mixed groups a challenge for instructors.

One reason that students are perceived to be different is the qualification criteria for each funder. HRDC participants have generally been working relatively recently, though a recent change in the rules has created a category of participants called reach back clients. These people may presently be on Social Assistance, but have received EI benefits in the last three years, and are considered a federal responsibility. Provincially funded clients are a lot less likely to have a substantial work history, and in fact one of the entry criteria for MAETT programs is that the applicant has been on assistance for ten months or longer. Unlike with HRDC clients, MAETT participants may be compelled to attend training and given a \$5 a day allowance to attend, which will be docked for any days the student misses. This is quite different from the HRDC system, which encourages participants to pay as much of the program cost as practical. One instructor told me what the difference means to participants, starting with the MAETT students.

If they don't come they get docked \$5 a day. Well it's hard to be motivated for \$5 a day, no matter what the circumstances are and so a lot of them feel like they have to be here, rather than seeing it as a potential opportunity or an opportunity for some potential in their lives they see it as a mandatory attendance and that can be a really negative impact.

Interviewer : What about EI clients, do they have to be here?

No. No, they don't have to, they're here voluntarily. They're here because they want to, they want to change their career paths or they want to increase their skill level. Generally they're more, they're more [pause] generally they know something, they know something about trades.

An extremely significant generalisation about the difference between the participant groups is that EI participants want to be in the programs. Given the organisation's emphasis upon motivation as a key component of success, it is not surprising that mandatory attendance was seen to lead to a number of problems. Several instructors told me about specific issues that arose with social assistance funded participants, yet they appeared not to have explored the possible reasons for their perceptions:

They're dealing with multiple issues, not just job loss or finding a job. Their biggest focus sometimes becomes cheque day, and it's not uncommon on cheque day (which is today) Mardis Gras day, we'll end up with maybe three people out of twenty who show up that day, the rest are gone to get their cheques. The next day you might end up with half the class. So cheque day and the next day. So what you have to start establishing is you don't take a day off when you get paid.

Well, there is a difference, because if you get somebody that's on welfare, it's usually because they haven't the same level of education as some other groups. But I look at it as a challenge, you know. And I've got the feeling that everybody deserves an opportunity, and if it takes more work to get them through, then as an instructor, I should be prepared to spend that little extra time and go with them.

And I have a certain amount of material that I have to cover on a daily basis, and then I give them an exam every Friday. And normally if I have a different class, let's say an EI program, or a CARS program, I would give them a test probably every two weeks. But with the CABS program it takes much, much more work on theory than what the other classes take. Cause, for a couple of reasons. 1: lack of education,

2: some of them have been out of school for twenty or thirty years, and for some of them Math is just a horror show. It wasn't that great when they were at school, and it's even worse after thirty years. And so it's up to us to bring them, and I try to bring the poor student up to at least an average level, and if I can do that, then I can make him employable.

Generalisations such as these, based on perceived group characteristics derived from policy and funding structures, create a strong boundary between two types of participants. Justified by anecdote and experience, they come to have explanatory power, and become self-justifying. The arbitrary nature of the policy structures dividing different forms of income support is not recognised, and the differences between recipient groups are reified rather than questioned. However, it would be misleading to argue that this construction is entirely negative, since it is often accompanied by a strong empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by, in particular, social assistance recipients:

Many of them out of work for three or four years. They've got major problems. One of the major ones of course is self esteem and when you first talk to these people you wouldn't think that was a problem cause some of them can work quite an act of bravado but it doesn't take long to scrape below the surface to find out what it's like to be out of work for two or three years. (UTP administrator)

It is interesting to note that despite the perceived differences between the students UTP manages to maintain a remarkably high success rate, with over 90% of people who finish the program finding employment irrespective of funding source. This challenges the stereotype that MAETT sponsored participants are less likely to be successful, especially as most classes currently combine EI and MAETT funded individuals. When asked about the reasons for separating the two groups,

administrators state they are keen to combine participants, but identify the funding structures as a major influence on the division. Yet the project officers, who actually write the contracts, are extremely interested in eroding the division between EI and SAR.

I encourage it. We live in a world that is mixed. It allows for, it's like an exchange, an interchange, it doesn't stigmatise people, and you find that people at different levels can, when you have the right kind of environment, help each other in that process . . . You realise that all people are equal. It's an equaliser . . . If you have a mixture of individuals, and you have a good adult educator that is good at group dynamics, you lengthen the program, but it's not too long. And the dynamics are such that relationships will form inside the group, and they'll provide an additional enhanced learning opportunity.  
(government project officer)

I think there is a common conception that people who are on income assistance are generally, have lower levels of education, lower levels of motivation, that sort of thing, so they need a lower level of delivery. Personally I think if you're trying to meet the needs of the client what you need to look at is what does the labour market require and everybody, whether they start from grade 4 or start from grade 10, should get what they need to get to this common goal.

I think that we have unemployed people and I think the government has a philosophy that I think would take years to change but I think if you need help you should just get the financial help if you're unemployed, not have to be designated as being on welfare because you haven't been recently enough employed. I really like that concept and I think from a fiscal perspective it should be a lot easier to administer one kind of [support], but I think we're a heck of a long way from that evolution. (government project officer)

While funders and administrators view the difference between MAETT and EI funded clients as an administrative matter open to being changed easily at any time, the instructors who work with program participants everyday are more interested in seeing the boundary between the two groups maintained. It is

reasonable that instructors would learn over time that some groups have different ways of learning the expectations of the workplace, but I am concerned that the implicit deficit interpretation contained in their descriptions of social assistance recipients can perpetuate a divisive view of unemployed people. Despite the comments of the project officer above, social assistance recipients are stigmatised within the program, and combining groups alone is not enough to redress this.

The division could be dismissed more easily as a result of teaching experience were it not for the way it plays into wider features of financial support systems for unemployed adults. Fraser (1989) has pointed out that different social programs have different implications in terms of class and gender of recipients. Analysing the US Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC), she showed that this provision was mainly aimed at destitute working class single mothers, whereas unemployment provision was aimed at displaced male white collar workers. Attempts to reduce the welfare rolls, mainly through reduction of AFDC benefits, can be seen as an attack on single mothers.

Fraser's (1989) analysis of the way that unemployment insurance and welfare are tailored to different conceptions of the model worker transfers from the US to BC quite logically. EI is designed for workers who can prove that their occasional and short term employment was caused by external factors. It is based on a discourse of rights, with workers entitled to benefits on the basis of contribution. The construction of the recipient is that of the sovereign individual, and the amount received is not altered by the number of dependants in the family,



or even the partnership status of the claimant. Social Assistance, however, is more of a subsistence allowance to ensure that nobody in BC actually has to starve. It is oriented to households, and varies with the number of people involved and the total household income. In addition, the underlying discourse of social assistance is that of needs rather than rights, making it possible to view welfare as little more than charity (cf. Fraser, 1989). EI is for the unfortunate breadwinner, welfare for the poor.

Recent economic changes in Canada have created a context where it is not only acceptable to blame those seen as contributing to the burden of taxation, but almost required. Neo-liberal ideas of the individual have helped to destroy the notion that poverty is not always an individual's fault (Brodie, 1996). One of the key groups to suffer from the combination of these notions have been assistance claimants, who are regarded within neo-liberalism as unwilling to get out and find work. There is a division between the deserving poor forced to claim employment insurance on one hand, and the undeserving charity cases choosing to receive social assistance on the other. In addition, there are structural factors built into the working world ensuring the recipients of the two forms of benefit will be different. It is easier for men to accumulate the hours of work required for an EI claim, since the majority of part time workers are female. Responsibility for child care is an important factor, especially for single parents with young children. Within UTP, several male assistance recipients used to work in heavy manual labour until age and injury made it impossible. Social assistance is often a lifeline for people who

have not had the opportunity to accumulate the education and work experience necessary for secure employment in a highly competitive economy. In the end, access to different forms of support can legitimately be considered as a matter of class and gender, with the overall effect that those lacking the opportunity to accumulate work experience and education are defined as undeserving— a perspective strongly consistent with neo-liberal human capital theory.

The individualistic philosophy of UTP rules out the possibility of looking beyond anecdotal experience with individual participants to understand why the differences between EI claimants and social assistance recipients exist. The approach taken by UTP comes dangerously close to perpetuating the notion of deserving and undeserving participants, reminiscent of Victorian notions of deserving and undeserving poor. Instructors, for example, prefer to work with EI groups, finding them better behaved and more motivated. For administrators, the EI programs are better funded, with MAETT not paying enough to deal with the problems arising in assistance dominated groups. Despite the commitment to community, the focus on the individual shaping the work of the project makes it all too easy to generalise about the deficits shared by a group of participants rather than tackle the commonality of marginalisation they face.

### The Male Milieu

The second significant manifestation of identity within UTP is the strongly gendered orientation of the organisation. When I entered the project I was struck by how masculine were the environment and communication style. My background is

non-profit organisations, where women are often in leadership positions and relations among those involved are relaxed and informal. At UTP I perceived a distinct air of machismo and an aggressive style of interaction arising, I believe, from the traditional masculinity of the labour movement (Kincheloe, 1999). Senior administrators walk with a swagger, bursting unannounced into each other's offices and dragging people onto the balcony for a smoke. I became interested in this behaviour, and began to include questions about this macho orientation in my interviews. Soon I learned that the strongly masculine nature of the organisation was all too readily apparent to the women involved, but almost invisible to the men.

One woman commented:

There's a tremendous male aspect that takes place here and one of the things that I have found, and of course being a woman I would notice that right away. It's not something that men tend to notice, they don't tend to notice male aspects when they're in a male environment but women notice it right away and it's an unfortunate situation. I don't know how you change it other than continuing to say or to remind people that under-represented groups include not only the visible minorities and disabled and First Nations, but also include women, so I am always looking at the opportunity to bring the female perspective into things and it's difficult. To be really honest with you. I got no problem answering a question like that. When I go into a room with all of the other program co-ordinators and placement officers and the people who are actually actively working on [the sampler program], I'm the only woman there and it tends to colour the direction of the program a little bit. I think we could do a better job if we had more of a equitable representation, not only in that room but when we're talking about the program itself.

Whereas several women commented on the existence of a basic equity issue, men saw the masculinity of the setting as an outcome of the work being done there.

The implication was that the educators and administrators were essentially powerless to change the male orientation of the program.

Yeah, maybe that's because most of the clients in here are male. So, it seems to work because that's the energy I guess men are used to. But for the most part, it might be, I guess, intimidating for some women sometimes. I just know when I'm doing my thing I try to be very sensitive to that stuff, and why can't women get in on that ra, ra type energy? Yeah, and I guess you're talking apprenticeships, you're talking trades, you know what I mean, just mentioning apprenticeship your face takes on a kind of a look like, you're thinking of digging and welding, and I don't know. I don't know how that came to be or if there was even a rhyme or reason or that's just how it evolved.

Making the maleness of the project visible brings forward the paternalism of UTP, demonstrated most clearly in their approach to supporting unemployed people. The organisation believes in holistic engagement with the lives of the learners in an attempt to improve each aspect of them, and previous chapters have shown how relatively light the emphasis on self direction is. UTP continually takes the stance that it knows what is best for the unemployed worker whatever their background or identity. They set themselves up as the experts, and this paternalism contradicts any impulses to empower participants. The overarching masculinity of the setting permeates the educational process, and has a significant effect on participants.

The women find that that sort of maleness, or what we call the testosterone brigade, they find that quite offensive, and so they tend to pull away from it, and it becomes more of a "oh God, kids again." But for the guys, it's destructive and they don't even realise how destructive it is to them. So they all band together around this one sort of, this one bully, and it becomes a, excuse my language, it kind of becomes a pissing match. And it detracts from the entire group.  
(instructor)

In chapter 6 I quoted a male chef who told the group that a knife should be gripped “as if it were an ex-wife.” The rules of the organisation may not consider this as sexist because even though it is reflective of a nasty mix of sexism and violence it is accepted as the humour of a high status individual. One of the weaknesses of a rule based system is the necessity for breaches to be recognised as such by the people enforcing the regulations, and if the male administrators are complicit with the male instructors this will not happen. It is no coincidence that a vocational instructor made this statement, as the high credibility of these staff members makes it difficult for either participants or colleagues to challenge them. By no means was sexism restricted to spoken comments, with the materials used in vocational components reflecting the same kind of masculine bias. The cooking manual includes this paragraph:

Garnishing is the final touch added to food before serving to improve its appearance. Garnishing is to food what cosmetics are to a women. Neither should be overdone. (cooking manual)

One woman told me of challenging the male administrators about the gender division.

I'll walk up to him very often and say, you know, we had a beautiful collage of pictures of our students, of all of them in the classes and then doing the technical training and they were all men and I looked at the collage and said, “that's lovely but there's not one woman there, what's our message?”

I was told administrators take such challenges well, but the need to repeat the challenge suggests that tackling the gendered orientation of the organisation is not a priority. A male instructor with a lot of community college experience

acknowledged the masculine atmosphere. “Unlike most of the community colleges in which the adult ed programs are primarily run by women that's true. It's striking when you first walk in here. It's not only male but it's older male.” The vocational instructors in the cooking programs I observed were white, macho-acting men over 55, and the basic skills instructors were one white woman and one Jewish man, both of whom were reflective and gentle in approach. Despite the genuine efforts of the project to avoid overt sexism, a tendency to value the perspectives and knowledge of older male vocational instructors plays itself out in the educational process. The organisation modelled by UTP is one in which men set the rules and own the ball. If the competitive, teasing world of masculinity is not a realm in which the learners are comfortable, they will not be comfortable at UTP.

### Preparing The Working Man

The roots of UTP's philosophy of education and citizenship lie in the concept of the liberal individual, and the goal of the programs is to create opportunities for people to improve themselves. One prerequisite for this process is that individuals are allowed to step outside the structures of discrimination that so deeply affect their lives. UTP believes that this can be done by ensuring silence on the topics forming the basis of discrimination— gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality. Yet it is this very silence that allows divisions between people to be maintained on the grounds of funding source, and that can make it difficult to tackle the masculine orientation of the organisation. One of the shortcomings of liberal assumptions regarding the ability to act is the way they obscure mechanisms limiting the potential for action.

In reflecting on difference it is worth noting I did not come across any staff members willing to talk on sexuality or ethnicity in the same way the gendered organisation was brought up by female staff members. One reason for this was the absence of representatives of the affected group to describe structures influencing their work, a phenomenon particularly noticeable in the case of visible minorities. The participants in the programs, as noted above, do represent various minorities at the population levels. The staff do not. The founders are white and male, all the co-ordinators are white, and I met no instructors who were not white apart from one lifeskills instructor not employed by UTP. At no point was it suggested that it might be helpful to the organisation to have more Chinese or Punjabi speaking workers. Even more than a masculine organisation, UTP can be considered as a setting dominated by English-speaking older white men.

The dominant discourse within UTP is the denial of difference, achieved through rules aimed at preventing discrimination and practices discouraging discussion of identity issues. In addition, it seems there is tacit agreement that choosing not to discuss who is absent will make lack of presence irrelevant. These strategies run together to ensure that difference and identity will never be a problem for the organisation, as they are simply left off the agenda. This approach leads to tension because it is not effective at reducing the impact of difference, and merely results in a form of collective denial that gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality do matter.

Avoidance of discussion of these matters is not universal in the project. As mentioned, some female staff members take it upon themselves to remind administrators of the cogency of gender in particular. However, for identity to be discussed in depth in the curriculum would require more than recognition of the subtleties of difference among staff. A way would have to be found to make the subject relevant to participants and safe for them to address within the classroom. The straightforward banning of certain behaviours appeared to be more acceptable to participants than in depth discussion of underlying issues, suggesting that the rule based approach has pragmatic value to the educational process.

Nonetheless, it is not surprising that the male staff members believe that maintaining a silence on such issues makes the structures of domination disappear. The most obvious explanation is that it is in the interests of the dominant group to avoid widespread engagement with difference in order to preserve their own status, but there are equally convincing alternatives. Difference may be an uncomfortable topic due to the implied complicity of male workers in the subordination of female workers. Another explanation is that since men suffer discrimination less frequently than women the problems of prejudice are less of a lived experience for them and their response is more of an abstract moral judgement. To that extent, the UTP approach fits feminist analyses of the different ways women and men reach their ethical commitments (cf. Gilligan, 1982), with women more likely to examine specific situations than consider broad rules. While this kind of analysis is rife with essentialism, it certainly held true in the CABS program I followed.



I do believe that UTP administrators saw banning the -isms as an effective way to tackle discrimination, even though their approach proved to be flawed. Their decision took place, however, in a wider context of organised labour struggling to come to terms with the changing nature of the workplace and newly emerging awareness of identity. In the 1990s, labour unions were the most important providers of education on social issues to working people (Kincheloe, 1999), even as they were trying to adapt to reduced numbers and different types of members. The traditional emphasis of unions on full-time working men with manual jobs is no longer sustainable. Though the analytical approach of unions has changed, the culture often remains that of the early twentieth century, with women in subsidiary roles to the male breadwinner. For example, the union supporting UTP has a substantial majority of female members, yet the project continues to play out traditional masculine understandings of social relations.

A substantial influence on UTP is the extent to which apprenticeships are male routes to employment. The feminine equivalent to the standard apprenticeship is the college teaching office skills leading to the pink collar ghetto. It is up to UTP how it chooses to interpret this influence and whether to find ways to challenge it more effectively. Despite their claim to social democracy, the conclusions of the agency regarding identity do not contradict those supported by neo-Liberal notions, with both seeing difference as a topic to be ignored. The manifestation of class, ethnicity, and gender identity at the project, even if there are

attempts to explain them away in individualistic terms, shows how ineffective and unrealistic this approach is.

It takes more than a set of rules banning overt discrimination to dismantle ingrained systems of advantage and disadvantage. It is all too easy to pursue benefits for one group, in this case unemployed men, at the cost of other groups. As Mouffe argues,

In order that the defence of workers' interests is not pursued at the cost of the rights of women, immigrants, or consumers, it is necessary to establish an equivalence between these different struggles. It is only under these circumstances that struggles against power becomes truly democratic. (1988, p.42)

One aspect of this quote worth emphasising is the notion of actively establishing an equivalency between struggles. It does not happen automatically, but must be a goal of curriculum development and educational process. It has to be discussed openly at all stages of the program, among all people involved. UTP has to take responsibility for explaining to the industry advisory groups overseeing each program why it matters that these topics are included in the preparation for employment. The project has to move towards a more critical, and self-critical, view of what it means to prepare workers, thinking beyond the preparation of the workingman to the equipping of the reflective worker. As Kincheloe puts it,

. . . a critical vocational education does not support unions wedded to an inequitable status quo, tied to outdated strategies of protecting existing jobs, or unconcerned with race and gender discrimination within worker ranks. (1999, p.325)

By transforming their education, and allowing the importance of difference to emerge, ultimately UTP could contribute to the transformation and revitalisation of Canadian unionism.

### Chapter Review

In this chapter I have discussed how diversity plays out in UTP. The project maintains a policy of discouraging a deep recognition of difference, and attempts to ensure that overt discrimination is not acceptable. However, lack of engagement with issues of diversity does mean certain divisions are perpetuated. Participants are treated differently depending on whether they are high status EI claimants or lower status SA recipients, and I have shown how this distinction can be linked to class and gender concerns. The organisation itself is highly gendered, both in its communication style and, ironically, in its approach to issues of difference. Other forms of difference do not arise because representatives of the affected group are not present to point out the absence.

UTP's approach to identity is consistent with the traditional values of a working man's organisation, but I have suggested it is not sufficient to deal with the issues of a contemporary diverse workplace. Some instructors do recognise this, and attempt to tackle the questions despite participants' resistance. The reason for the dominance of denial as a way to deal with diversity, and why it is critical to deal with the issues in more depth, becomes clearer in the next chapter as I elaborate on the kind of worker UTP wants to produce.



## **Chapter 8: Creating The Good Employee**

At the heart of Union Training Project, buried in the behaviour deemed acceptable, is an idealised picture of what a successful individual looks like, and what they do. As I spent time observing the programs, I became familiar with this picture, described in this chapter as “the good employee.” This concept is a central orienting feature of the educational programs at UTP, used as an immediate framework for evaluating conduct and as the ultimate court of appeal. It is the implicit purpose of the project to create such workers, selecting out individuals who do not comply to the requirements and encouraging those who do. More significantly still, the good employee ideal is a cultural norm recognised, and valued, by all involved in UTP.

In previous chapters I have pointed out that UTP avoids discussion of unionism and diversity, both areas with the potential of making the current labour situation appear more than an individual trouble. The emphasis of the information provided to learners, especially in vocational components, is strongly placed upon assisting workers to adjust to current workplace expectations. In this chapter I show how the individualised UTP approach goes beyond the selection of curricular content to the very heart of educational process— the control of learners’ actions.

### **Shaping Students**

One of the most striking features of provision at UTP is the centrality of notions of individualism, and in concrete terms this often manifests as shifting

responsibility for unemployment to the participants. The corollary of this shift is that participants became primarily responsible for rectifying the situation by finding work. This can be a benefit to learners as it allows them to feel as if they have contributed to their own success, but it also has a less beneficial side. One example is the way funders expect learners to contribute financially to the program in order to demonstrate their commitment, and to show they are taking the program seriously.

It was felt that people needed to have more of their own buy-in so now we negotiate with people. "This is what you want to do, this is how you're going to get there, how are you going to pay for it?" And then we try to chip in only at the point where they have no other resources. So there's no automatic, "well the fees are paid for this and you automatically get a living allowance whether you need it or not," this kind of thing. (government project officer)

There are problems with this expectation running beyond the obvious argument that expecting unemployed people to pay for a program not guaranteeing employment is a peculiar practice. The deeper contradiction is that EI support is only available to people who have been judged by financial workers not to be responsible for their own unemployment, and yet they have to take financial responsibility for getting out of the situation. While some courses, such as college programs in computer programming, can be considered as a personal investment in the future, this argument does not stand up so well with basic employment preparation programs. In essence, there is a requirement to prove that you have not contributed to your unemployment, and a requirement to contribute to ending it by subsidising programs of dubious effectiveness. While UTP's program statistics

suggest that it may well be a reasonable investment for those who pass through the program, there is still an asymmetric distribution of responsibility.

A further dimension of the contradiction is that the shift of responsibility to participants is not balanced by a shift of control. They have usually contributed to the cost of being there and yet still find themselves in a coercive situation with strict rules for dealing with the various financial systems. One example of this is the visit of a project officer to the CABS program, as recorded in my fieldnotes:

[The project officer] launched into the background of the program, and the fact it was being paid for by the federal government, who wanted to encourage "training at reduced cost." The first resort for people needing help is [the co-ordinator], and then their case manager, but "if things get to the point where you're going to leave school, phone me." She asked a couple of questions of the group- "if you're sick, what do you need to do?" "All comfortable with your do's and dont's?"

Without the notion of the individual learner it would be hard to run any educational program, but this notion can vary with respect to the emphasis placed upon it, and the perceived relationship between the individual and their community. At UTP unemployment was explained in terms of the barriers possessed by an individual. I observed one classroom where the instructor told a small group that "we all have barriers, there's a reason why you guys are here". There was talk about people being "poor money managers" and how participants should "learn to manage your money in a more appropriate manner." Deeper causes for unemployment were acknowledged, and it was suggested that "there are some things that are beyond your control, and that's where you have to take back control". I heard little suggestion that factors such as class and industrial

restructuring were playing a part in the BC labour surplus, and the final message was that “we own our own behaviour.”

The other side of this unproblematic construction of unemployment are the factors that make a person successful in the program, and in work. The successes of participants who complete the program and gain employment are predominantly talked about in terms of individual attributes and capacities, without mention of the more collective aspects of their experience. Explaining the success of UTP, one administrator stressed that the difference was their emphasis on the feelings of the individuals in the program.

Feelings is the key to the success of these programs and everybody else out there building curriculums and course outlines are looking at the labour market. They don't deal with the feelings. Well we've been successful with our conflict resolution, anger management, our interaction with our counsellor, our professional counsellors and co-ordinators.

The most important feeling was motivation, which was sometimes talked about as a work ethic, or as having the right attitude. With this attribute, people will get jobs.

The ones that show the commitment, work hard, they're the ones that are going to get the work you know. You can always tell. I mean we've had some really bright students come through and they just couldn't be bothered looking for work. (UTP administrator)

A person with the right attitude is in a good position to overcome any lack of skills or experience which may hold them back. An employer will make up any shortfall in skills if the employee approaches the job in the right way.

If you have all thumbs, if your attitude's right, you want to help, you're there at the start of the day, you're there at the end of the day. If



somebody's cleaning up, like brushing up you do it. He's going to teach you everything he can cause your attitudes right and we always stress attitude over and above aptitude . . . cause employers will always go for attitude over aptitude every day of the week. (UTP administrator)

The motivated participants will find work which is suitable for their abilities providing they can show the strength of their work ethic. Good white-collar work goes to those who show the highest levels of commitment to their trade.

There's a lot of jobs out there in the service industry. And as I said before, if they got a good work ethic, there's work there for them. Some will be line cooks, and some will be executive chefs in a few years, and I've got quite a few that go on to an apprenticeship program, and those that do go on to the apprenticeship program usually go on into management after about six years. (instructor)

The emphasis on the subjectivity of workers is consistent once more with neo-liberal individuals making their lives successful through grit and determination. However some instructors, far more than the co-ordinators with whom I talked, do recognise social influences on the lives of participants. One instructor talked about the relationship between the individuals in the programs and the wider collectivities to which they belonged.

The majority of them are not motivated to change their lifestyles and don't know how so it can be a pretty thankless kind of task. But part of what we do here is that we work on community because community is where our support systems are supposed to be. Like our community is supposed to be able to support us as individuals and as groups, and my sense is that you put back where you get the help from. Each individual has a unspoken responsibility to sort of put out a helping hand, help the next person along. And I [pause] now although we talk about commitment to community, what it is more than anything is, is getting the opportunity to see what happens to our clients when they can do something for the community and the difference that it makes to their self esteem when they complete a project and, say, donate it to the community.

Despite the occasional recognition of the collective aspects of life by instructors, individual attributes lie at the heart of acceptable behaviour for participants in UTP programs. One of the funders explained that adult education was an ideal vehicle for engendering individual traits in learners, and suggested that more individualisation would be a desirable development.

Well, adult education methods [pause] to me have a very strong individual focus anyway. So the individual teaching skills, learning skills, those sort of things, I don't know that there needs to be a lot of change in them. I think it's more the administration of the overall intervention project, whatever you want to call it, that needs to change to allow people to start and stop in individually modularised kind of ways. So that's where the change will be, at that administrative level, the delivery level rather than at the individual skills of the instructors other than the need to keep up to date with the labour market changes. (government project officer)

UTP is clear about the individual attributes it hopes learners will develop through the programs, and is equally clear about unacceptable behaviour. In cases of inappropriate conduct UTP will work hard to understand the reasons behind the conduct rather than blaming the individual out of hand, and to provide support if required. Instructors will cut participants slack for certain behaviour if there is a reasonable explanation, though anything affecting other learners is carefully monitored.

What's not allowed is for students to be nodding off in class, I don't mean from fatigue, cause I have students who have been working all night jobs, to come to class and I'm grateful that they still come to class even though they worked an all night job. I'll say "take a nap, grab a cup of coffee, I'll fill you in on the first hour or you know, try to ask your colleagues or your other students what's been covered, but thank you for coming to class." So I don't take that personally. I don't want students to be nodding off or I don't want students to be dealing drugs. I don't want students to be coming in drunk. I don't want

students to be baiting other students racially or in terms of gender or any other issues. I don't want students to be dumbing and stupidizing other students, you know, insulting them on fundamental levels of their existence. (instructor)

One new challenge to the generally accepted standards of behaviour in the project has been the introduction of computer instruction, and the internet in particular. While it is relatively easy for instructors to ensure that a class sitting at desks is on task and behaving appropriately, it is far harder in a lab of twenty computers. Notices are posted on the wall warning participants not to access pornographic web sites, reflecting the organisation's policy of discouraging discriminatory behaviour, though it struck me as interesting that there were no warnings about the extreme right wing resources found on the web. Once again there is an emphasis upon certain types of discrimination, with heavy consequences for breaching the rules.

With computer training we try to get them interested in the computer, play on it, we don't mind you playing on it. And then you find out what they're getting into on the Internet and we're very cautious of it and we warn people straight up front, the Internet's not to be used for certain things. If we find you not using it correctly, you're into this porno movie stuff, you're gone, and you are. (co-ordinator)

As well as the obvious behavioural regulation, a number of more subtle factors play into judging how well a participant is fitting in. One of the most significant of these factors is where a learner does not demonstrate enough motivation. As expected, lack of the most desirable trait has the most far reaching consequences. Instructors particularly dislike working with individuals they

perceive as being less driven, both because it is hard work and because the chances of a successful outcome are so much lower.

For the instructor it's particularly difficult because basically what you're doing is trying to, you know, trying to push a wet noodle and if they're not willing to move or they're not motivated it's a phenomenal amount of energy that's expended for sometimes very little reward.  
(instructor)

Lack of motivation is commonly explained in terms of the length of time that people have been out of the workforce. One instructor explained that people on income assistance were particularly likely to lack motivation after being unemployed for several years.

Some of them have been much more than that, eight or ten years, or it could have been, you know, it could be the way their family is. Their family grew up that way and so they do. We know that tends to run in families so . . .

The strength and consistency of the perception of unemployment as a private trouble was constantly surprising to me. The last quotation could reasonably be attributed to a conservative newspaper columnist rather than a worker in an avowedly socialist organisation. The overall perception is consistent with the neo-liberal construction of unemployment as a failing of the individual, but it also reflects the liberal humanism of the organisation and its denial of collectivity. The central perception of the organisation, and the one upon which regulation of behaviour and assessment of outcomes is based, was the liberal individual acting as a free agent. This notion pervaded the educational process, and despite the founders' claims to be developing the whole worker, the good employee was whole only insofar as they were independent.

As individual learners pass through the programs, they are introduced to a framework of judgements about who they are and how they learn. The caution commonly found in academic circles about how people learn and how they relate to others is not a feature of this employment preparation program. Little room is left for participants to reflect on their own experience of learning when generalised statements about “the reality” are delivered with the justification of providing “power” to learners.

[The instructor] talks about introverts and extroverts, and how people are one or the other. One participant said that she thought she could be both, and was told “we can do both things, but we have a natural preference.” Knowing about styles could help participants– “now you know the reality it's a piece of power for you.” (fieldnotes)

The importance of acceptance is reinforced by the argument that listening is a far more significant activity than talking. The construction of listening in this context is not active in order to critique information given, but passive and focused on retention and acceptance. The need to listen is a central theme of lifeskills and basic skills components.

[The instructor] asks people to turn in their workbooks to the page on listening skills, and asks “how many rated below 70?” Several hands go up. “Above 90?” Nobody. [The instructor] tells a story of a mock interview in which she asked “Why do you want this job?” twice and got two detailed and entirely irrelevant answers. Eventually she asked the participant why she wasn't answering the question and the participant told her she hadn't asked a question. The rest of the class reassured the participant that [the instructor] had asked a direct question twice. The upshot of this is that “she might get the job, but she's not going to keep the job”. (fieldnotes)

Considering how extensively instructors referred to principles of adult learning, I was surprised to observe many occasions within the early stages of the

program where participants were treated in ways reminiscent of initial schooling. I recorded one example in my fieldnotes. “[The instructor] goes around checking on work and then stands at the front to check the answers. She calls out a question number ‘1c’ and the class calls back ‘yes’ or ‘no’ depending on whether the fractions were equivalent.” Participants appeared to enjoy the exercise, not least when they could point out the error of their ways to individuals providing the wrong answer. Overall, the behaviour expected of learners in initial components demonstrates a motivated and committed attitude, along with an ability to listen and be a good sport about classroom games. What is missing from this list, despite the expressed interest of basic skills instructors, are the ability to work critically with information and participate thoughtfully in discussion. The initial components are about teaching participants to accept information provided by instructors, including judgements about their personality.

When participants reach the kitchen, expectations become considerably tighter and reflect aspects of an idealised workplace more fully. The person responsible for creating the atmosphere in vocational components is the instructor, usually an older man familiar with using strongly hierarchical structures to manage a large operation. I became interested in the criteria these instructors used to assess their own teaching, and one cook instructor explained to me that an important principle of his work was fairness. I asked the instructor to expand on this idea.

**Fairness? I believe that if a student needs to be corrected, or he needs to be put in the right train of thought, he should be put in his place.**

And if he does something wrong he should be told. And he should be told immediately if he does something wrong and what the consequences will be if he doesn't do it right. And secondly he should be complimented when he does something right. (instructor)

This quote both reflects the maleness of the organisation and makes it clear that this version of fairness does not require students to participate in the rule making process. Judgements about what is appropriate are left entirely in the instructor's hands, predicated on the argument that these individuals are experts on what the workplace requires. The closeness of the tie in between vocational components and the workplace reflects UTP's efforts to blur the line between education and work.

We keep saying "you might be going to school but really think of it like you're going to work," because it really is work. We try and set up our work structures as close to work environment as we can get, with the same kinds of expectations that would take place in a workplace. We try and replicate that. (administrator)

The heavy push towards workplace values permeating the educational delivery at UTP does occasionally result in some flashes of irony and resistance on the part of learners. "One participant was reading from a form which asked for his transferable skills, and suggested 'laziness, unco-operativeness . . .' and started to laugh." (fieldnotes) The comment that the chef is always right became a running joke among the participants. In a review session of a fieldtrip to a local college, "one participant points out that the kitchen staff are not wearing hairnets, and comments that [chef] had told them that you were not allowed in the kitchen without them. And 'Chef's always right'." (fieldnotes) On the same trip, there was some discussion about hats. "Returning to the front, [the instructor] reminded

people to remove their hats, as [chef] had said they were unacceptable. Participant: 'Why?' Instructor: 'Looks sloppy.' Participant: '[Chef] must be old fashioned. Participant 2: (loud aside) 'He's always right.'" (fieldnotes) The instances of resistance I observed were rare and short lived, and participants were generally respectful and serious about the program.

The pattern of regulation in UTP programs shows substantial behavioural control in the hands of instructors and an overarching concern with compliance. Despite the philosophy of the organisation and its claims to recognise wider social factors, the system of regulation is predicated upon the ability of, and necessity for, participants to accept responsibility for their own situation. The message transmitted is that while unemployment is a public problem, learners can help to address it by changing their own behaviour. To a large extent this contradictory position can be explained by the pragmatic needs of running a program where the involvement of large numbers of people in a relatively short term project requires strong behavioural control.

What I found surprising was the consistency and power of the regulatory system, extending as it does from the discriminatory behaviour discussed in the last chapter to more concrete issues such as timeliness. It is interesting to consider how the rules of life at UTP can be so broad and yet so focused on the individual level. As I observed the programs I became aware that the referent for the behavioural control lay outside the educational setting itself, and that the good student was a particular manifestation of what is believed to make a good employee.



## The Good Employee

The notion of the good employee helps to explain many elements of the regulative discourse for the students. As a union sponsored training project, UTP is interested in developing those skills and attributes believed to make individuals successful in the trades, and these come together to create a sketch of a certain type of person. The good employee is a powerful and pervasive idea within the project, acting as an ideal for participants to aspire to and a set of behaviours for instructors to use as an evaluative mechanism. One comprehensive statement regarding the good employee appears in the cook training manual.

As a chef, you must be interested in cooking. You must know good food and try at all times to serve food of a high standard. If your standards are high you will have little trouble pleasing those you are serving. You must have the ability to organise work and instruct your helpers, as well as a good basic foundation in mathematics to be able to calculate food and labour costs quickly and accurately. You must have a background in English. Today's chef must be able to do more than write menus. You will often be responsible for letters, reports, and written instructions. A chef must have a good understanding of people and be able to get along well with them. You must set a good example at all times for your subordinates; often your employees are a reflection of yourself. You must have a good knowledge of major kitchen appliances and be able to apply the basic principles of purchasing, storage, menu planning, food preparation, cookery, serving and sanitation. A chef must be able to do every job in the kitchen. Today's chef is a businessperson. Your responsibility does not end with serving the finest food possible or making money for your employer. You are also responsible to the people that work for you and the public whom you serve. Above all, you are responsible to yourself. (Bateman & Brown, 1992, p.63)

In addition to responsibility to their immediate context, good employees are also aware of, and responsive to, the trades community within which they work.

This perspective is one of the few concrete manifestations of the social mission of

the agency within the curriculum, and recognition of social structures beyond the individual. One instructor talked to participants about how important membership of that community was to her.

[The instructor] talked a little about what it means to have a trade. She passed around her Trades Qualification, explaining that there were two parts to it, and how proud she was of it. She worked hard for it, but only after 7 or 8 years on the job did she feel that she knew what she was doing and confident about that knowledge. "I thought there was a lot of power in that piece of paper," but the power really came in realising that she could do her job and was good at it. Her trade is important to her, and she believes "I have a responsibility to give back to my trade." (fieldnotes)

As well as having the right kind of attitude towards employment, good employees should also have a good grasp of how to get a job should they become unemployed in the future. One key attribute is awareness of their preferences and abilities, and the kind of work they are most suitable for. An instructor explained this to a group of participants with very little education or work experience.

The decision should be based on the individual's "work habits, personality, what you like to do, what your work ethic is like." You should make several selections to avoid being "backed into a corner." The kind of words being used included "career", "path" and "barriers". Participants contributed a number of anecdotes about their previous experiences. (fieldnotes)

The factors taken into account were often quite practical.

The discussion of working around barriers included a discussion on appearance started by one young man with straggly long blondish hair, many tattoos, and a general air of rebellion. [The instructor] referred to the necessity for "palatable" appearance, and suggested that it should be appropriate for the customer, contrasting a BMW dealership to a heavy equipment plant. (fieldnotes)

In addition, they should be able to go out and find the appropriate type of work, including accessing the hidden labour market.

[The instructor] moved into talking about the conference she had been attending for the previous three days, asking “where do you go to learn about jobs?” She suggested that 95% of people look in the newspaper, the internet, or HRDC, but that 95% of jobs are not advertised. This is the hidden labour market. One of the speakers at the conference had told a story about being pregnant. She was at work one day in an orange sweatshirt looking and feeling like a pumpkin, when somebody had walked past the window, looked in and seen her. He had entered the building and enquired, on behalf of his fiancée, whether her maternity leave cover had been assigned. This was given as an example of creative jobsearch. (fieldnotes)

Good employees are individuals who are self-directed in many aspects of their vocational life, including the ability to identify and pursue appropriate employment. They know the limits of their abilities and suitability, and are businesspeople with a strong work ethic. They are responsible to their employer, their colleagues, and the extended membership of their trade. Once again, personal traits are key descriptors in the conception of what makes a good employee, and the inclusion of so many personality based factors into the ideal is partially justified by the perception that deficits in interpersonal abilities were more likely to lead to unemployability than lack of technical skills. People do not become unemployed because of changing workplace conditions or lack of technical ability— what counts is their ability to build and sustain relationships.

A guy who's got his ticket in sheet metal, he's not going to get fired cause he can't do the sheet metal, or a guy who's got a ticket in welding won't get fired because he can't weld, he'll get fired because of something that's going on between him and another worker, or between him and the boss, or sometimes something that they bring from home, conflicts from home that don't get resolved and then they

bring that attitude to the workforce. So we really believe that that's the reason a lot of people get fired is for something that's interpersonal, so it's important that these people have these skills. (instructor)

As well as the core skills of the job and the interpersonal skills of employment, good employees have other strengths to offer employers. One government project officer talked about them in terms of peripheral skills.

We used to talk about life skills and those are kind of peripheral skills that people don't always have and it sometimes provides them the barrier for maintaining employment or even finding employment . . . But the demand for those skills is also becoming greater, they need a set of communication skills, and they need a set of computer skills, and that sort of thing. So we started to look at basic computer literacy as being an issue to a person becoming employed, even if they're working in a gas station, a retail outlet . . .

A final attribute of the good employee is the ability to react appropriately to harassment or discrimination. While preparing students for a one month work experience placement, an instructor told participants:

If there is any harassment of any type "you don't have to put up with it." "Phone me" at the end of the day. If there is anything "illegal, immoral, unacceptable," especially for the women "phone immediately", don't wait for the end of the day. Apprenticeship is not female friendly, but nonetheless, there is no reason to put up with racial, sexual, or orientational discrimination. (fieldnotes)

The good employee ideal is a complex construct with many aspects. The central principle is that technical skills can be taken as given, and that the other elements of employment relationships are more problematic. In many ways, evaluation of the good employee is based on the non-vocational elements of employment, and as such can be seen as transferable. The mythology of the good employee becomes a generalisable ideal applicable to every employee in every

vocation. After all, who can argue against responsibility as a good trait for employees?

Yet the good employee ideal has some important inconsistencies. The most obvious is that it would take a remarkable individual to display the all of the valued traits. It would be hard to find an individual combining the ability to conduct an aggressive job hunt with an orientation towards collegial, mutually responsible relationships. Similarly, the good employee requires people to demonstrate both realism and ambition in their vocational goals. Another tension lies between the need to possess both broad transferable skills and the deeper subject specific knowledge of a vocation. While the good employee suggests that relationship skills are the more important area, this emphasis devalues the job related abilities employees spend many years developing.

At UTP the good employee notion has developed into an aspirational ideal, the state towards which the participants aspire. The regulation of participants is based on the idea that once they get out into the workplace they will have to fit with this particular set of expectations, and that not doing so will result in failure to secure long term employment. As a principle permeating the educational programs of the project, the good employee has shortcomings, and among them are the types of social ability that are presumed on behalf of participants. It is accepted that workers have the experience and knowledge necessary to select a vocation with the required commitment and certainty, a problematic assumption when working with people who have been unemployed for a long time. The confidence required to

pursue jobs aggressively may also never had an opportunity to develop. The notion of mutual responsibility may be incomprehensible to individuals leaving a social assistance or employment insurance system designed to be coercive and to deny the possibility of participants acting independently. While the good employee is an interesting aspiration, it contains within it enough idealistic values to ensure that real workers are always in a state of deficit.

The gaps between the ability of people in UTP programs and the good employee may or may not be able to be narrowed through educational provision. Confidence, ambition, and imagination are difficult traits to inculcate in a six month program when people have had years of learning to be dependent and reactive. It seems unrealistic to think that employment preparation programs can turn people into the idealised good employee, raising the question of what purposes the construct serves within the programs.

### Discipline And The Good Employee

One useful way to examine the good employee ideal is to follow Foucault and consider it as technology of the self produced within a particular set of power relations (cf. Foucault, 1980). This way of approaching the good employee ideal does not imply a deliberate attempt on the part of instructors and other influential people to invent a mythology applicable to worker control. Instead, the ideal is a crystallisation of various interests coming to bear on the program. The notion can be clarified by examining the most significant forces involved in the creation of the good employee, though it should be recognised that such constructs do not arise as

an unproblematic result of a few influences. They develop over time, reflecting many perspectives, needs, and applications of power, and Foucault (1984) is clear that one of the greatest errors in this kind of discussion is to assume that an origin can be found.

An important influence on the field of employment preparation in Canada was the federal government's adoption of the Conference Board of Canada's (1996) list of essential employability skills. The 1996 version emphasises academic, personal management, and teamwork skills, including some interesting examples. "Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems, and make decisions" is cited, as is "lead when appropriate, mobilising the group for high performance." As mentioned earlier, the list of skills developed by the Board is included in UTP's proposal documents. While the Board's recommendations are very useful in terms of broadening understanding of what employers say they need, caution is required. The Board membership listed on the back of the skills brochure is entirely composed of large corporations, a highly problematic sector of the Canadian economy. Several examples, such as General Motors of Canada and the Royal Bank of Canada have gained impressive reputations for high handed treatment of staff and willingness to lay off large numbers of employees. A skills profile developed by this type of organisation should be received with some scepticism by representatives of organised labour.

The Conference Board themselves recognise their list to be partial. A disclaimer is added to the bottom of the list: "For individuals and schools, preparing

for work or employability is one of several goals, all of which are important for society.” This vital sentence is often overlooked in the development of programs. These corporations are recognising the need for more than just good employees to create a good society, and it is ironic that the message is not being heard by an organisation as interested in community as UTP.

The trades background of the majority of instructors and administrators at UTP, and particularly that of Maclean, also feeds into the good employee ideal. Having learned and practised their trade in a strongly hierarchical setting where “the chef is always right” would make it appear natural that acceptance is an important trait of new workers. The importance of biography, or what Bourdieu (1990b) has called habitus, should not be overlooked. People do tend to recreate the conditions they find comfortable, and this is especially true of educational settings. While philosophically UTP are committed to the worker, the form of that commitment is fundamentally shaped by the staff’s own experience in the workplace. Involvement of employer groups in the development of the curriculum tends to reinforce the employer friendly workplace relations underpinning UTP’s programs. The good employee will function best within the current hierarchical system of workplace regulation found comfortable by administrators and employer representatives.

One more influence I found particularly interesting in this study is the participants’ degree of investment in the good employee ideal. On several occasions throughout this report I have mentioned ways learners act to pull discussions back



on topic. When other participants or even the instructors start to head in directions appearing less relevant to the vocational outcomes of the program, participants will make their unwillingness to proceed quite clear. There is far less resistance in the other direction, against the notion of clearly defined acceptable workplace behaviour. Participants take an active role in ensuring that the educational programs proceed directly towards employment goals, and are relatively uninterested in exploring alternative ways of conceiving the workplace and their place in it. The good employee ideal is important to learners, and is accepted by them as a useful way to think about the demands of employment.

As a whole, the good employee can be considered as the creation of many actors coming together to create and sustain a mythology. Its use, as the regulatory principle of the programs, is to discipline participants to think about work in a particular way. Their willingness to support the ideal suggests that it achieves its goal very effectively by being attractive enough, and sufficiently similar to common sense, to become part of learners conceptions of the workplace without too many problems. More importantly still, it becomes part of learners conceptions of who they are, and what is expected of them, within employment. One indication of the identity implications of the ideal is the remarkably strong emphasis upon personality traits and interpersonal strengths rather than vocational skills found throughout the programs. The good employee ideal is a panopticon allowing access to the private and public aspects of workers' lives in order to ensure their compliance and productivity.

Irrespective of the pervasiveness of the good employee ideal, it is not the universal set of desirable behaviours some would claim, and clearly displays the influence of the dominant views of the labour market in the late 1990s. Whether compliance to the ideal is a useful preparation for employment depends on how the workplace of the future is envisioned. If it seems likely that there will be a reserve army of labour moving in and out of temporary, low-skilled employment, then the crucial skills for this group are indeed the ability to get jobs, follow orders, and be productive. Preparing people for more long term and specialised employment requires more than being good employees, it necessitates providing them with the knowledge and tools to engage fully with their vocation. One aspect of this preparation is assisting workers to build an understanding of why the structures of the workplace are as they are, how they could be different, and the breadth of their role. The most significant shortcoming of the good employee ideal is the implicit and unproblematic acceptance of current workplace relations as the basis for assessing worker behaviour and valuable knowledge.

The philosophy of UTP remains unrealised in the agency's approach to regulation. The good employee ideal is, in many ways, the antithesis of social democratic views of workplace participation and collective representation. Writing on the possibility for social democracy in the workplace, Dewey argued :

The chief opportunity for science is the discovery of the relations of a man to his work— including his relations to others who take part— which will enlist his intelligent interest in what he is doing. Efficiency in production often demands division of labour. But it is reduced to a mechanical routine unless workers see the technical, intellectual, and social relationships involved in what they do, and engage in their work

because of the motivation furnished by such perceptions. (Dewey, 1916, p. 85)

These relationships are obscured by the idealised view of the good employee. Developed on the basis of employer interests, anecdotes, and the willingness of participants to accept regulations potentially leading to employment, the good employee has come to have an iconic value within UTP. It is used both as a concrete basis for curriculum selection and as a philosophical ideal, and does solve problems for the organisation by providing a strong justification for policy making and a demonstration of the importance attached to employers' needs.

However, I suggest this is not sufficient. Workers who are truly motivated and engaged in their employ understand the reasons lying behind the form of their employment, calling for a broader approach than reproduction of the Conference Board's list of essential skills. As one author puts it, the consequence of education

that seeks merely to respond to the demands of the workplace seems all too clear: Individuals patterned to take their place unthinkingly in a world that operates beyond their control with no respect for their needs. . . . we adopt a position of passivity, waiting to be "done to" rather than acting ourselves. (Wood, 1988, p. 174)

To social democrats in general, and trade unionists in particular, such a consequence is unacceptable. The advantages of having a clear process of behaviour regulation within the program are outweighed by the costs of having a hierarchical rule structure. The use of rules to address issues around difference, pornography on the internet, discussing union history, and even the attitudes of learners may be effective in the short term. The long term effect, however, is to produce well

disciplined and compliant workers ready to meet the needs of a changing and competitive economy, rather than take a meaningful role in shaping it.

### Chapter Review

The regulation of behaviour at UTP demonstrates clearly how pervasive and influential are the interests and perspectives of employers. The aspirational ideal of the educational program is a good employee based upon attributes chosen by corporations and ratified by the personal experience of instructors in hierarchical workplaces. The possibility for workers to play a role in forming the rules of workplace behaviour is ignored, both in the explicit teaching of the organisation, and the relations modelled in the classroom. The individualism of the behavioural concerns once again runs counter to the philosophy and commitment of the labour movement in general, and this project in particular, by effectively denying the importance of collective concerns or the influence of context. If an individual fails to measure up to the ideal, the failure is caused by their personal deficits, and there is an implicit argument they may not deserve to be employed.

In the next chapter I step back from this close empirical examination of UTP in order to address the question of why the curriculum takes on the form it does. I reintroduce Bernstein and Bourdieu, and argue that one way to gain insight into the contested and complex work of UTP is to consider how it transfers social and cultural capital to those it deems to be good employees.

## **Chapter 9: The Good Program**

The problem I have tackled in this study is identification of the influences on the selection and delivery of knowledge in UTP adult education programs. The last four chapters have dealt with major themes I developed from my findings: the organisation of UTP itself, modelling particular sets of values to participants; the instructional practices, with their emphasis on administrative and instructor control limiting the potential for learners to influence pedagogy; the approach to diversity, where denial serves to mask but not negate the importance of difference; and finally the good employee ideal permeating the regulatory practices of the project. Each of these themes reflects the policy and philosophical context I outlined in chapter 3, and represents a balance between many different interests and influences.

In this chapter I will provide an explanation of why UTP curriculum takes on the form of an elaborated code. This explanation, based on the work of Bourdieu, will inevitably be both partial and contestable, but I believe it to provide valuable insights into the way social structures play out in this educational setting. My interest in this analysis is not to critique the existing provision, but to understand why it exists as it does. In other words, I do not ask “why it is not what it could be?” but rather “why is it this?”

## Patterns Of Pedagogy

Curriculum at UTP, as I have shown, is based upon a fundamental tension between the philosophy of the founders and the requirements of learnfare. Time and again, the possibility of creating an integrated and holistic program is negated by the specific demands of the funding mechanism, or the administrators' perception of them. Particularly in the vocational stages of the program there is a strong reversion to discriminatory, hierarchical, practices strongly contradicting the hopes of MacDermott and Maclean. Their claim to be delivering a different form of employment preparation is reasonable in that successful participants emerge from the program with valuable vocational qualifications and a sound preparation for participation in the contemporary workplace. However, the parallel claim that this form of labour market training is necessarily more supportive of participants is a lot more problematic, with the interests of employers clearly influencing the curriculum more than those of workers. Despite the influence of the labour movement the provision goes to great lengths to avoid engagement with the injustices at the heart of wage labour, whether gendered, economic, or cultural. The status of older white males is reinforced by the program design, and the possibility of advancement in academic terms is explicitly devalued. Overall, the program's benefits are delivered in a particularly narrow and reproductive vocational domain.

Yet the program is seen as successful by almost all involved. The education UTP delivers functions well within its context, and raising the question to be discussed in this chapter. Many of those involved see the process of curriculum

formation at UTP as very effective, and my concern is to explicate exactly what it does manage to achieve, and what value it holds for the people involved. The elaborated pedagogic code of the organisation is no accident, leading to the question of why strong classification and framing are valuable in the project. What purposes are served by having clear boundaries in place and turning away from the opportunity to have participants involved in the design and delivery of the curriculum?

The constant heart of the UTP employment preparation curriculum is the myth of the good employee, with all behavioural and attitudinal expectations arising from this construction. A great deal of effort is expended by all involved to ensure the educational programs remain faithful to this central aspiration. Even though this ideal does not manifest in the same way all the time, changing with the involvement of different people as instructors and participants, it underpins the majority of decisions and evaluations made at the project, whether of knowledge or of people. My research captured only one set of relations at work in particular iterations of the program, but I do believe that the dominance of elaborated conceptions of what it means to be a good employee is a robust finding. The data was consistent enough to suggest that the good employee myth is an important long term factor in the training, influential in each program despite changes in its form.

The participants take an important role in sustaining the notion of the good employee. To different degrees participants accept the collection of personal traits associated with the ideal, and this is one of the most powerful factors involved in its

reproduction. It is interesting to reflect that one of the reasons for the sustained differentiation between EI claimants and SA recipients may well be the differing extent to which each group accepts the good employee ideal. For people who have been in the workforce recently the notion of people being successful on the basis of personality may be familiar and acceptable on a common sense level, whereas those outside the workplace for some time may be more sceptical. The claimed difficulty of teaching social assistance recipients may well have nothing to do with educational levels and everything to do with willingness to submit to a new form of control. The good employee ideal has at its heart the notion of the panopticon applied to the workplace, where every aspect of the worker is open to scrutiny. Without the co-operation of the participants in the programs the ideal would founder, yet it is widely accepted as an important factor in preparation for employment.

As mentioned in chapter 4, Bernstein believes that the regulative discourse, contained in this case in the good employee narrative and the approach to diversity, dominates the educational process. His argument that everything follows from the rules shaping appropriate behaviour in the educational setting is borne out at UTP, with the good employee ideal used as a measure of everyday teaching techniques and an explanation of success. The participants who get jobs and support the success of the project are those coming closest to the good employee. The notion of the ideal employee envelopes and pervades the work of the agency. Ideas of identity, what constitutes good teaching, and even how the project is organised are nested within the good employee discourse.



As well as being useful within the organisation, the good employee ideal has more far reaching value. It reflects the same fundamental view of the labour market underpinning learnfare as a policy framework. In chapter 3 I showed how neo-liberal explanations of the economy and human capital theory have substantially shaped learnfare, and this transformation from a high level political and philosophical perspective to a concrete program can only occur where there is a compelling discourse with explanatory and prescriptive power (cf. Latour, 1996). People will only support a program idea where there is a clear and interesting narrative at the heart of it, and the good employee plays this role for employment preparation at UTP. It runs through the macro-political context and the micro-politics of everyday practice, transforming all that it touches. At every level, from the philosophical conceptualisation of learnfare to the choice of how much time should be allocated for cigarette breaks, the good employee is the master narrative, the central invention of the UTP employment preparation program.

In order to attain this level of pervasiveness the good employee ideal must take the form of an elaborated code. The persuasiveness of the ideal to many groups of people and its universality suggests it must be infinitely transferable without losing its core values, one of the qualities of an elaborated code form.

Stronger classification and framing allow the construct to float above any particular context, containing within itself the rules allowing it to be recognised and realised in the actions of participants and remaining consistent in different settings. As Bernstein (1996) argues, the self contained nature of the elaborated code is a

critical aspect of its ability to transcend specific situations. An example of this transcendence is the possibility of evaluating how well an individual displays desirable qualities irrespective of the specific conditions of that display. A potential cook can be compared to a potential welder and a judgement made on the suitability of each to enter the labour market. Issues which would complicate the process can be set aside, as is demonstrated by UTP's approach to difference. The strongly defined boundary of the good employee ideal does not admit the relevance of gender, class, and other structures.

The corollary to this argument is that restricted codes could not work within employment preparation programs because they require a setting where a shared culture of value and meaning can be assumed. Rather than working within a single culture, UTP programs set out to move people between the diverse cultures of unemployment, with their associated sets of values, and the quite different culture of employment in the trades. The acculturative process requires a pedagogic approach able to transcend any one locality and bridge the values of unemployed people and employers. The common-sense nature of the good employee ideal allows it to appear sensible and desirable to many people in different cultural contexts, and while they may have some reservations about the chef always being right they do have to accept the legitimacy of behavioural demands in the program. Restricted codes cannot acculturate unemployed people to the workplace, making elaborated codes necessary to the intended outcomes.

This does not imply that UTP's own claims to be delivering an integrated and holistic curriculum should be dismissed, and I believe there are two ways in which the claims are justified. Firstly, by making a success of what they view as a labour friendly employment preparation model, UTP have opened the door for other alternative approaches to employment preparation. If a union can do such a good job of preparing workers for apprenticeable fields then it makes a strong case for other interest groups to play a role in labour market training. Secondly, the philosophical position taken by UTP does make a difference to the programs. The commitment to supporting workers strongly shapes the expectations held of instructors and the support they are to provide learners. On the individual level emphasised by administrators, participants in the project's programs are very well looked after. While my analysis suggests that the overall effect of the project's education is to shape people to a particular end, and to do it through particular disciplinary measures, I also believe it is essential to acknowledge the real benefits accruing to people passing through the program. UTP is successful both in its own terms and as a model to other learnfare programs.

When taken as a whole the patterns of pedagogy at UTP are consistent with the explicit interests of policy makers, funders, the union, administrators, instructors, and participants. However, the provision does represent a hierarchical and exclusive view of workplace relations, and while this is partly derived from the policy context of learnfare programs, it is also true that the project's own decisions often reinforce this tendency. I found it surprising that when UTP acted to mediate

the demands of policy upon participants the result was often to reinforce the interests of employers. For example, linking the basic skills components so explicitly to vocational outcomes is an internal decision tending to close rather than open curricular options. This raises the question of how the emergence and maintenance of an elaborated curricular form serves the interests of the various parties involved. While I have shown there to be structural reasons making stronger classification and framing appear necessary, but it remains to be seen why it would be considered desirable. Provision may well be embedded within neo-liberal approaches to economy, but why does it not meet with more resistance? What purposes are served by the project's decision to create a pedagogical pattern at odds with its historical roots and philosophical commitment? Addressing these questions requires introduction of the capital based educational analysis developed by Bourdieu.

### The Way We Work

One conceptualisation of the course as a means to transfer capital is offered by human capital theory, as discussed in chapter 3. This is the official explanation of why employment preparation programs are important, suggesting unemployed people lack particular forms of individual capital which would make them desirable workers. The problem with this explanation is not that it is inaccurate, but that it is insufficiently nuanced. It does not tackle the question of why certain forms of capital matter except in terms of conscious and instrumental application. For example, the tendency of chefs to require obedience is sufficient reason for this trait

to be desirable within human capital theory, and there is little exploration of possible alternatives or of the thinking behind the expectation of obedience.

A more critical pedagogy requires engagement with the nature of the valuable knowledge, and the reason for that value to be assigned. Bourdieu's perspective on capital, outlined in chapter 4, is a great deal more subtle and complex. It goes beyond the easy assumption of meritocracy to examine the use of education as a mechanism to allocate and reproduce advantage, and to ask why certain forms of knowledge constitute valuable capital. The three main components of Bourdieu's system are field, habitus, and capital, with the latter two dimensions embedded in the first. Each social field has specific forms of habitus and capital associated with it, and it makes sense to begin this discussion by identifying the field of UTP.

The field within which UTP programs operate is not the obvious one of learnfare or employment preparation, and neither is it union education. As I argued in chapter 3, the provision stands somewhat apart from both of these areas. A more useful view of UTP programs is to consider them as part of trades education, a highly vocationally orientated training for specific employment, and the practices of the programs can be viewed as originating in the project's interpretation of this tradition. There are elements of labour education present in the curriculum, such as the attempt to enact an integrative philosophy and a holistic approach to workers, but generally the knowledge in UTP reflects values associated with the cooking

trades. The lodging of the programs within this particular tradition explains a great deal about the habitus associated with the training.

There are two ways of considering habitus in this case. There is a general form of habitus associated with being a worker employed in trades, and a specific form tied to being a new apprentice in the cooking trades. The role of UTP programs is to assist participants to learn to operate comfortably with both the general and specific forms of vocational habitus. The good employee construct derives from trades training and work experience in a straightforward way. For example, the emphasis on accepting the chefs' judgements and conforming to their expectations is seen as a key feature of successful apprenticeship in the cooking trades.

The vocational, rather than educational, nature of the field in which the programs operate can be demonstrated in several ways. The strength of the links established between program administrators and employers during the design of the program and development of the proposal show how important are vocational considerations. It is noticeable that neither participants or instructors are involved in this process. Similarly, the separation of vocational components from each other, and from basic skills, argues for the dominance of vocational structures over educational process. As I argued earlier, there are good educational reasons for the programs to be collapsed both vertically and horizontally, but this would compromise their utility as clearly defined vocational programs.

Defining the programs as vocational also helps to explain the status given to trades instructors, who become key individuals in the organisation. It is not

surprising that UTP tries so hard to retain and recognise them when their knowledge and credibility is so crucial to the success of the project. The practical, anecdotal knowledge of the instructors is a key component of their ability to prepare participants for the habitus of the workplace. Basic skills instructors are less valuable when what they have to offer is seen not as a central component of the organisation, but as a preparatory step. The orientation of participants towards vocational outcomes can also help to explain their desire to maintain a pragmatic, applied focus in basic skills education. If the aim of this program is not to provide a general education, but rather a very specific training, why would they show an interest in Gillian Guess? Any knowledge not directly related to vocational outcomes has to borrow its credibility from trades instruction, explaining why cooking related exercises are successful in numeracy and literacy work. The dismissal of basic skills by vocational instructors reinforces the tendency to view these subjects as handservants of the “real” purpose of the program— entry to the cooking field.

The lack of adult education experience of the trades instructors is not a handicap since their value is more strongly associated with their place in the vocational field than any educational considerations. The tendency of vocational instructors to view education as an extension of work means that the distinction may not have a great deal of meaning for them in any case. The use of formal examinations in vocational components, for example, is a common sense extension of the exam system of apprenticeship. Similarly, the strong frames around pacing

and order of instruction simply reflect the demands of the workplace. The possession or use of educational techniques is considered irrelevant and subordinate to the practical preparation of learners for the conditions in the contemporary kitchen.

Skills become central as the means of assessing employees most relevant to the workplace. The social mission of the project, while worthy, can be viewed as a distraction from the business of ensuring participants can carry out specific tasks at the appropriate time. The holism of the founders fails to carry through into the vocational components because only the skills matter to the employer. This does not mean, however, that these skills are entirely technical, and social or organisational abilities are considered as a valuable part of the package, especially when constructed as “motivation” or “attitude.” However, the non-vocational aspects of the individual are seen as of little interest to employers, and by extension, vocational instructors. The same argument holds for UTP’s attempts to deny difference, where the ability to do the job is emphasised over the identity of the individual. While everybody should get a fair crack at the whip, the gender, class, or ethnicity of the line cook is usually not a prime consideration in hiring. Ability to get on with the chef de partie and clean carrots is viewed as more likely to make a difference in the long run.

UTP as an organisation colludes in the emphasis upon vocational education despite its professed philosophy. The administrators do view basic skills and trades instructors differently, and are prepared to have one group as contract instructors



while the others are taken on for a longer term. The evaluation of instructors is more strongly lodged within a task oriented, pragmatic work model than a complex educational approach. The strong boundary between the two areas of knowledge and the respective instructors, with status conferred upon the vocational areas, does support the unproblematic reproduction of work related forms of knowledge. But in the final analysis, I suggest, that is exactly what UTP want to do.

### Considering Capital

Moving unemployed workers into the trades is achieved by transmission of cultural and social capital to the program participants. Cultural capital in this situation is the knowledge of how to behave in order to attain desired ends within the field of professional cooking. The cooking manual used by the programs is the written representation of the core of cultural capital in this setting, a formal inscription of official knowledge (Apple, 1993). This valuable entity, including pragmatic and social aspects, must be protected against possible dispersion to the unworthy or contamination by alternate approaches to cooking, such as veganism. The education at UTP does more than simply provide access to professional cooking techniques, and the pedagogy of the project has the double role of transmitting a desirable commodity and selecting those to receive it. The rules around behaviour are strong because of the need to ensure recipients will behave in the correct way when they receive this knowledge. They get stronger throughout the program because the cultural capital associated with entry to an apprenticed trade is more valuable than universally available knowledge such as basic skills, and therefore

more restrictions have to be in place during those components. The process of selection benefits people demonstrating a responsible attitude towards use of the capital they will receive, and excludes those who might abuse or dilute it. A boundary is created between those who are fit to possess the knowledge and those who must be kept outside, separating the worthy and the deserving from the unworthy and undeserving. Social assistance recipients, having been unemployed longer than IE recipients and often having a patchier work record, have less capital to begin with. The perception of MAETT sponsored learners as requiring more effort can be considered as an effect of both needing more capital allocated to them, and not having demonstrated their fitness to have it.

In the last few chapters I mentioned several concrete examples of the bounding of valuable knowledge in terms of both capital and habitus. In basic skills components participants are permitted to engage in free writing, while vocational components have exams, suggesting a far more rigid definition of what is correct in the latter. Once participants reach the kitchen the chef is always right, whereas basic skills instructors can, and will, be challenged regularly. This demonstrates the stronger boundary between instructor as expert and learner as neophyte in vocational, as opposed to basic skills, components. As with the good employee ideal, learners continually participate in the creation of the boundary around the vocationally relevant. When they ask basic skills instructors for material more closely applicable to cooking it reflects their perception of a divide between valuable and less valuable cultural capital. Instructors also participate in a number of ways,

the most striking example being the chef instructor who commented the basic skills instructor was “trying to teach a subject she knows nothing about.” Many other examples of the pervasiveness of this boundary have already been mentioned, and its universality and strength are striking.

Turning from cultural capital to social capital focuses discussion on the identity of the people in the setting, in terms of their qualifications and life experience. Social capital is the network of obligations and power arising from membership in a group providing members with access to collectively owned capital. The primary source of social capital at UTP is the network shared by members of the trades, and some of the credibility ascribed to vocational instructors may be attributable to the fact that they and the founders of UTP move in similar circles and have common areas of knowledge. In effect they share ownership of the social capital represented by membership of the trades, and for this group of actors the same network defines the meaning of obligation and provides opportunities to exercise agency and power. This plays out in the curriculum as the expectations of learners at UTP, for example, are similar to those found in apprenticeship. The fundamental expectations of commitment and obedience arise from an area of experience shared by many administrators and instructors. Membership in good standing of the trades community is a vital component of the vocational instructors’ and the founders’ definition of who they are and what they do.

As participants come through the UTP programs they are expected to move towards membership of this same network of social capital. The networks they used

for support and resources when unemployed are seen as less valuable than the new networks developed through being employed as an apprentice. In essence, participants are being asked to change from one community to another, an extremely significant and difficult move to make. For vocational instructors it is critical that participants show willingness to attempt this move before they are allowed to progress to work placement settings in hotels or other real life settings. Vocational instructors use their own credibility and social capital to obtain the work placements from members of their network, and successful placements are therefore critical to the instructor's status. If a participant was placed in a major hotel kitchen on the strength of the instructor's word and then proved to be incompetent, the instructor would be held responsible by their own professional community.

Having an elaborated pedagogic code helps to control the capital transfer process by ensuring the capital valued by the agency is only transmitted to those who are seen to deserve it. Entry to the trades network is predicated on the individual demonstrating that they will be responsible members, with all the restrictions and specific attitudes implied. Both social and cultural forms of capital are implicated in the maintenance of this boundary, as who you know and what you know are evaluated together in the process of assigning membership. If the participant's attitude to the vocation of cooking is seen as unacceptable, or if they cannot demonstrate mastery of the cooking manual, they will not progress to apprenticeship. The overall effect is to increase the status of vocational instructors

because they possess power over who gains access to the vocationally appropriate form of cultural capital, who is offered entry to the social capital network, and ultimately who benefits from the economic resources available to the professional chef.

The implications of capital transfer at UTP also help to explain the ambiguous position of basic skills. The effect of basic skills instructors on the final outcome of the program is relatively limited, and this can contribute to their perceived lack of status within the organisation. The social capital of basic skills instructors derives from membership of educational networks very different from the trades bodies, and unlikely to be directly beneficial, or even relevant, to program participants. Equally significantly, these networks of social capital are not shared with the vocational instructors and administrators. This makes them of little value in the setting, and they can even be seen as counter productive. An example of this arose when the college instructors' union was preparing the Accord described in chapter 5, giving their members first refusal on community based education. The actions of the college based instructors involved leveraging their own social capital to ensure better returns in economic capital, as they organised themselves to claim more of the available work. At UTP the reaction of administrators was hostile and defensive, since that form of social capital had very little value to them and they saw its expansion as an imposition.

The lack of relevance of the basic skills instructors' social capital has an interesting side effect. It does not have to be protected from contamination in the

same way as the social capital associated with membership of the trades because participants are not expected to join the instructors' social network. There need not be a process of vetting to ensure that only the most appropriate people gain access to the social capital since the instructors retain the capital. Whereas the trades instructors gain their status from being able to *do* things, as seen in the emphasis on anecdotes, basic skills instructors base their social capital on being able to *teach* things. Their social capital, and to some extent their cultural capital, derives from the ability to transfer knowledge rather than from the knowledge itself. This makes an elaborated code unnecessary for basic skills instructors since they can transfer knowledge to whomever they like without losing any of their own capital. Rather than being the product of a political commitment, the drive towards weaker classification and framing in basic skills components can be seen as a result of the highly abstract and protected nature of the capital held by the instructors. Whereas trades instructors are passing on a part of themselves, and are concerned that it should go to the appropriate person, basic skills instructors are exercising their skills without sharing them.

The cultural capital of the basic skills instructors is more fully implicated in the teaching process than the social capital, since what they know is seen as more valuable than who they know, but reservations about the value of either form still exist. There is widespread recognition that a certain level of literacy and numeracy makes it easier to learn to be a tradesperson, but beyond that level the dominant perspective is scepticism and caution. At UTP I believe academic people are viewed

as being potentially a little too clever for their own good, and their services are seen as being like Brussels Sprouts— they are good for you, but taste horrible. This position is somewhat ironic, because if any area of UTP's concrete educational provision reflects the espoused philosophy of the founders it is basic skills. However, the overarching purpose of the project, to provide unemployed workers with particular forms of social and cultural capital, makes it extremely difficult to mediate between the need for strong boundaries to preserve capital and the desire for more inclusive educational process.

In summary, the dominant role of UTP employment preparation programs is to transmit the social and cultural capital associated with current workplace relations. The important actors in this process are the administrators, the vocational instructors, and the participants, each of whom must buy into the value of the capital being transmitted and the structures surrounding that transmission. The group most clearly outside this process are the basic skills instructors, who find themselves working in an organisation that consistently demonstrates the lack of value ascribed to their work. Different employment conditions and lack of recognition serve to underscore the organisation's view of basic skills instructors as necessary to, but apart from, the main process of acculturation. They are not only outside the dominant field of vocational instruction for trades employment, but outside the mainstream of the project as well.

Viewing employment preparation at UTP as a process developed in the context of the trades education field helps to provide insights into the operation of

the programs. From this perspective they are essentially consistent and effective despite their failure to fully address either the philosophy espoused by the founders or the tradition of trade union education. On some level, to criticise them for these failings is to accuse an orange of not being an apple. Each party involved gets something of value from the current form of the programs. The training may lack a critical edge, and may accept the values of employers too easily, but it does succeed in providing unemployed workers a chance to enter the workforce on relatively favourable terms.

### The Use Of Adult Education At UTP

Union Training Project provides a very specific form of adult education to participants, and it is important to recognise this provision not as an end in itself, but as a means. As I have argued, the primary goal of the program is to get unemployed people into work. While there may be instances of tension between the learnfare policy context and the labour orientation of the organisation, funders and administrators both adhere to this understanding of UTP provision. In addition, both unions and program funders are influenced by the neo-liberal background to current forms of employment preparation, such as an emphasis on skills, and disinterest in the collective frames surrounding the individual. An example is the belief that whatever the class, gender, or ethnicity of the learner, it can be overcome by denial and a focus on demonstrable competencies. UTP is a contemporary example of vocational adult education, unusual in that it is delivered by a union, but generally concerned with work related outcomes first and social effects second.



This is not the view held by the founders of UTP. Their argument that UTP provides an innovative form of employment preparation is only sustainable, however, in comparison to the most reproductive forms of adult education. The founders have had little opportunity to develop critical models of adult education, or to develop ways to go beyond the construction of education as a secondary function of vocational preparation. They have no specific educational background, and have worked in few educational settings. In addition, the models of education they are most familiar with are traditional apprenticeship and employment preparation. This does not imply founders are unaware of the contradictions of UTP, but it may be difficult for them to conceive of different ways to organise the educational process without wider experience.

The way adult education is used in the project has far-reaching implications. As mentioned in chapter 1, two of the central concerns of the new sociology of education are the stratifying and incorporating effects of education. At UTP the incorporating effect is twofold. Participants are brought into the system of wage labour through involvement in the program, reducing the amount of labour under utilised in the economy. In addition, the union itself has to buy into the neo-liberal construction of unemployment in order to be a credible contractor to the state, as demonstrated in my examination of the proposal. The claim to be providing a different form of employment preparation is thin protection against the influence of the mindset necessary to successfully obtain funding. When the labour movement

has started to slide towards individualistic, skills based provision on a broad front, it must be practically impossible to avoid the effects of incorporation.

Stratification permeates the educational process at UTP, and it is hard to find an area not manifesting some degree of hierarchical influence. Learners are allocated to specific positions in the division of labour based on considerations ranging from the pre-program funding source to their willingness to listen to, and obey, the chef. All learners are not created equal, and will not attain equally desirable employment, with the final decision to send an individual to an expensive downtown hotel or a small diner in the hands of the vocational instructor.

Stratification is circular at UTP, with the division of participants echoed in the divisions of project staff, itself derived from the trades to which participants aspire. The specialised knowledge possessed by those involved in delivering the programs has the effect of a selection mechanism, with adult education as a justification of that function.

The application of adult education in UTP is strongly functional in effect, and the function it aspires to is development of good employees. The process of capital transfer is conceived in exclusively technical terms, reminiscent of Freire's (1972) notion of "banking education." Combined with the individualistic tendencies inherited from contemporary neo-liberal economic theory this creates a context where a simple version of human capital theory can hold sway. The term banking education is extremely appropriate for a process designed to transfer individual capital.

By supporting a narrow view of educational process, the administrators are turning away from many alternatives with a great deal to offer. Constructivism, where the experience of the learner is taken as an essential element of, and influence on, later knowledge acquisition offers a very different way of approaching the program. In that case the unemployment experience of the participants would become a resource for developing their understanding of the social world in which they live. Similarly, adopting a sociocultural approach to learning would emphasise the importance of the group in learning, and allow implicit recognition of the collective capital forms identified by Bourdieu. In either of these cases the effect would be to create a curriculum capable of broadening knowledge beyond the bounds of the strictly vocational.

However it is unlikely that people within UTP could act alone to change the form of education because the present provision so strongly acknowledges many sets of interests. This study has shown how embedded in social context the development and delivery of curriculum is, with decisions about valued knowledge and means of transfer influenced by both the macro structures of political process and the micro level of individual decisions. As Bourdieu puts it, “no doubt agents do have an active apprehension of the world. No doubt they do construct their own vision of the world. But this construction is carried out under structural constraints” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.130). There is autonomy available within the organisational structure, as highlighted by the basic skills instructors, but finally the actions of the individual are limited by collective decisions on the most desirable means and ends.

One significant element of the social structures at UTP is the derivation of the program's credibility from its ability to help individuals find work. Everybody wants to see people pass through the program, gain employment, and get off public assistance. On the part of the participants this may not be entirely voluntary, but it is better if the program they are coerced into attending leads to relatively well paid and desirable work. While the emphasis of this study has lain upon the structures surrounding curriculum it should be recognised that agency in this case is not a polar opposite, with individuals involved in the program determined to do it differently if only they had the chance. While there may be some discomfort with the form of the program, in general the biography of those involved, with their trades background and vocational orientation, predisposes them to value this provision very highly. I was told this a number of times by co-ordinators, who would discuss the project with every appearance of enthusiasm and commitment. People appeared to believe in the work done at UTP extremely strongly.

The dissenting voices were usually female, and usually involved in basic skills education. This is not surprising given the lack of status or recognition offered to the concerns of people who were not white male trades instructors. As I reflect on my time at the project, I would go so far as to say that the setting was essentially hostile to women and to people involved literacy education, and I see this as one of the biggest challenges facing the project. The linking of struggles, as suggested in chapter 7, requires first of all a recognition that these struggles are real and worthy. To achieve this recognition the project will have to transcend both the

gendered history of unionism and vocationalism as well as its own patriarchal culture.

It is ironic that the literacy instructors are not more involved at UTP, as they potentially offer the best hope for reformulating the project. With many years of experience and training behind them they would be able to increase the options available to the founders. They do not have more or better knowledge, but they do have different insights to bring to the table, ones that could be valuable if UTP decides to tackle social issues more substantively. Taking this step will be difficult as long as the project continues to offer learnfare programs, but it is an important possibility to consider.

Developing a more progressive curriculum would require UTP to solve a difficult paradox. I have argued the transfer of capital to be an important and valuable function of the project, and elaborated curricular structures an essential aspect of this process. If UTP were to decide to adopt a more progressive approach, and this took the form of a curriculum with weaker framing and classification, there is a real risk of losing the credibility associated with capital transfer. Retaining an elaborated code is an option, if the code were to contain content on labour history and other collective political elements. While this would maintain credibility for the program as a way to transmit capital, the process would carry different forms of social and cultural capital less likely to translate into wage returns. While the use value of critical knowledge is high, the exchange value is often limited. It is hard to see how UTP can substantially alter their pedagogic form while continuing to

provide participants with the capital forms desirable in the field of professional cooking in a short time period.

To a large extent the curriculum of UTP has evolved to fit its context. The balance reached is a product of what Bourdieu (1990) calls practical logic, the vague and indeterminate principles of behaviour associated with a cultural setting such as the habitus. Rather than being approached through a series of rational decisions designed to maximise returns or effect, the pedagogy of UTP has come together haphazardly, containing contradictory intentions and incompatible desires. The educational framework is full of inconsistencies and misjudgements, but the programs function well enough to achieve desirable ends. Adult education is used within the practical logic as a means to recognise and reproduce the interests involved in the social construction of knowledge lying at the heart of UTP employment preparation.

### Chapter Review

This final chapter argues that UTP can be viewed as a mechanism for transferring particular types of social and cultural capital to unemployed people, making elaborated codes essential. The field in which the program operates is not union or employment preparation education, but is vocational training, with the desired outcomes and valued knowledge relating back to the tightly framed work related criteria expressed as the good employee ideal. I have shown this explanatory approach to be highly consistent with many of the findings reported in earlier chapters.

UTP education is a product of its context, including the agency and biography of those involved in its perpetuation. While there is a degree of autonomy in the program, I have argued that there are limits in place, mainly deriving from function of the project as a capital transfer mechanism.

## **Conclusion**

In closing this discussion I will review the course of the research, highlight possible further work, and end by updating the story of UTP. This study has identified a number of structures influencing the curriculum of a single adult education program, in this case an employment preparation program delivered under the auspices of a trade union. Analysis of these structures has demonstrated the way curriculum is shaped by forces external to the immediate educational setting, the most pervasive being the concern with effective capital transmission shared by all involved. The possibility of using employment preparation as a mechanism to achieve progressive ends is severely limited by the need to acknowledge the priorities of funders, administrators, learners, and the neo-liberal backdrop against which the programs operate. This study demonstrates the value of analysing knowledge in adult education using a sociological perspective. While it is less formal than curriculum in K-12 schooling, I believe that it does provide insights into the lives of adult educators and learners. The operation of wider social structures leaves behind fingerprints, and it is in the selection and delivery of knowledge many of these can be found.

One of the most important questions arising from this study is how feasible it is to change the effect of a funded program. UTP set out to do something different with employment preparation, and ended up creating a more effective way to reach the outcomes desired by the funders. Their best efforts to create a more socially oriented employment program became diluted as the project grew to involve more



courses and staff. The final form of the program, focusing on an individualised humanistic understanding of unemployment, developed to fit its situation, with the transformative desires of those involved already taken into account in its creation and perpetuation. Despite its emphasis on current workplace relations the curriculum was not simply imposed, but created to fit its context and recognise the interests of all involved, albeit within a neo-liberal understanding of the labour market. This perception challenges the notion of a resource of potential resistance lying at the heart of reproductive education, and suggests the ability of educators to transform adult education into a liberatory practice may be more limited than often realised. A program offering material rewards to successful participants as well as fitting with contemporary common sense understandings of the economy appears remarkably robust, as demonstrated by the degree to which the UTP provision manifested features of the learnfare discourse.

The interests of all involved were very much tied up in ensuring that the training ran smoothly and provided effective capital transfer. It was important to the instructors to ensure the course selected the best candidates to receive the social and cultural capital, and it was important to the learners to be in a position to benefit. In chapter 3 I mentioned that Bourdieu sees transforming capital from one form to another to take effort, and the corollary of this insight is that the more training settings resemble the predicted workplace the more competent trainees will be when they reach a commercial setting and the quicker they can realise returns on their new capital. One effect of this argument is to make the

reproduction of hierarchical workplace relations in the training setting a positive strength rather than a source for concern.

The biography of those involved in the program plays into this process to a large extent. The suggestion that basic skills instructors are teachers passing on abstract skills while vocational instructors are experts passing on their practices highlights a cluster of important differences. At UTP basic skills instructors usually have university degrees, and often come from middle class backgrounds. The trades instructors have come up through the hierarchy of their vocation, and do not have extensive formal education. The tolerance for theoretical or philosophical musing was markedly different between the two groups, I observed, and this led to different weights being placed upon the possibility of conducting the courses towards alternative, more progressive, ends. The social philosophy of the founders performs a critical function here, providing a form of common ground for all involved.

The final issue to highlight is the importance of the aspirational ideal at work in the educational setting. At UTP the good employee notion strongly circumscribed the educational form, limiting the possibility of doing things differently while simultaneously acting as a key element in allowing the program to exist at all. Creating a less reproductive program would necessarily involve the development of a good employee ideal including critical awareness of workplace issues, and understanding of economic and political process. Such an ideal could rightly be called the good worker, and would hold the potential to link labour market training and organised labour in a creative and progressive manner. While

difficult, I do believe that UTP could have gone some way towards establishing a more progressive aspirational ideal.

In terms of the methodology of this study the combination of Bernstein's and Bourdieu's approaches proved effective in identifying the structures of UTP curriculum and analysing their implications. Though Bernstein's framework was originally developed for K-12 education, moving the idea of codes to adult education allowed me to ask a number of questions not often tackled in adult education research, such as the way knowledge was affected by the organisational structure of UTP. Bernstein's approach was particularly effective for linking pragmatic factors of the educational setting into the knowledge structures of the educational process. At the same time, there are limits to this approach it is important to acknowledge, and my analysis of UTP runs beyond Bernstein's work where I try to explain or discuss the implications of a particular educational factor. The inclusion of Bourdieu in later analysis is necessary for a sufficiently theorised discussion of the capital implications of educational form. The theoretical approaches of the two writers are highly complementary, and did provide an interesting and insightful perspective on adult education.

However, I remain aware that using a structuralist approach will tend to highlight structures, and I believe that if I were to undertake supplementary research I would like to work phenomenologically with employment preparation participants. In this way, the formal structures of the framework could be supplemented and fleshed out with details of learners' understanding of the

educational process. Another useful piece of work would be to conduct similar analyses in several programs to check the robustness of my findings. Would a community literacy project, for example, also contain an aspirational ideal reflecting the biography of administrators and instructors?

I will finish by updating the story of UTP since this research was conducted. The employment preparation contracts have started to reduce in number, and the project is looking at laying off permanent staff members. More significantly still, UTP have started to become uncomfortable with their involvement in community oriented learnfare programs, and are trying to find alternative forms of funding. When I conducted my research one administrator estimated that they were providing 90% of their services to employment preparation participants. By May 1999, they wanted to change the balance to 50:50 between employment preparation and services for union members, and if feasible would have liked to go to 90% for members, 10% for employment preparation. Working with current forms of employment preparation was not worth it, I was told. My summary report for the project was described as an interesting historical document, a snapshot of where UTP had been 9 months before.

The involvement of the Union Training Project in employment preparation can be seen in retrospect as an experiment I was lucky enough to be able to study. The issues and challenges I articulated in this report may not be the same ones that MacDermott or Maclean would identify, yet we shared a concern with the effects of employment preparation. In my case I get to write about it, and in theirs the

program orientation gets changed, but we are all expressing discomfort with the dominant idea of what constitutes valuable working knowledge in the late 1990s. The remarkably powerful and seamless discourse of individual responsibility for unemployment shapes education however much we do not want it to, and distorts or dilutes our best efforts to do something different with the available resources. A sobering thought for any proponent of critical adult education setting out to extend the possibilities of practical logic.

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