Educational Developers and Their Uses of Learning Theories: Conceptions and Practices

by

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a study designed to understand how learning theories fit in the practice of educational developers; specifically, developers' conceptions of learning theories, their use of theories, and, finally, factors that influence the way learning theories shape developers' practice. To investigate these questions, a qualitative study was undertaken with eleven Canadian university educational developers, all formally associated with a campus-wide teaching and learning centre. By taking an exploratory approach, while drawing upon learning theories and educational development literature, aspects of educational developers' understanding and use of learning theories were highlighted.

The findings showed that educational developers in this study: (i) conceptualize learning theories as lowercase 'lt' as opposed to uppercase 'LT', and (ii) define learning theories based on their prior disciplines. These practitioners didn't associate learning theories with formal academic theories aimed at understanding a situation; instead they had formed their own synthesis of theories to help them perceive the characteristics of a particular situation. Also, the way the participants defined and conceptualized learning theories seemed to correspond to their prior disciplines and areas of study. Five definitions of learning theories were identified among educational developers: philosophy, language, educational-psychology, holistic, and neuroscience-based. In terms of how theories shape developers' work, developers were categorized in three groups: (1) those who had a tendency to implicitly use learning theories –

focusing more on practical explorations for achieving a desired outcome (seven in total); (2) developers who had a tendency to consciously use learning theories – taking more of a comprehensive approach by examining their assumptions and focusing on causes and effects that influence their practice (three in total); and, (3) one developer who had characteristics of both groups. Factors such as educational background, professional identities, and perceived audience readiness appeared to influence participants' uses of learning theories. Seeing their work as part of a collective, and attending to the emotional needs of their audience also seemed to impact these practitioners' work.

Considering the limited research examining how educational developers conceptualize learning theories and the way theories inform their practice, this study contributes in generating discussions and future research in a community that continues to grow and situate itself within the higher education landscape.

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kisses when Mommy was tired, and your love and appreciation for which I am so blessed! I dedicate this work to you for showing me how learning begins and continues; may you always find the joy of learning in your heart. You are my life, the twinkle in my eye!

As a parting thought – Life is truly good!!! I hope that we will always remember to not take life for granted, and appreciate the simple things that bring smiles to our faces and warm our hearts with pleasure and happiness.

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CHAPTER ONE: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how learning theories fit in individual practitioner's work, and specifically, those engaged in educational development activities in campus-wide teaching and learning centres. There has been little exploration to date, of developer's conceptualizations of learning theories and their place in the practice of these individuals. To explore this area, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 11 Canadian university educational developers. In this chapter, I offer a brief summary of the Canadian educational development literature, present the guiding research questions, reveal my story and assumptions, identify the significance of the study, and provide an overview of the thesis chapters. My goal has been to go beyond descriptions of activities and measures of effectiveness by seeking how learning theories guide developer's practice and factors impacting their use of theories.

Educational development centres are working to bring about change in university teaching. Confronted by rapid cultural and technological changes in society, educators must continuously learn in order to keep up with current trends and demands. Cross (2001) argues that establishing educational development centres has been the most common approach to improve teaching and learning in higher education. Singer (2002) states that "formalization of these centers has increased campus conversations on learning and institutional cross-fertilization of ideas" (p. 60). Currently these centres exist in thousands of universities and colleges across the world. The diversity of the centres' services, programs, and resources serves to advance the effectiveness of faculty in all their professional roles, but in particular, in relation to their

teaching. Educational development centres employ a wide range of strategies – including research, administrative processes, political action, educational and training actions, organizational and policy-related approaches – to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education (Wilcox, 1997). Even though these centres have been working to initiate and provide educational development programs since the 1960s, many academics at Canadian universities are still unaware of their existence (Wilcox, 1997).

Educational developers represent a truly eclectic group of professionals (Weimer, 1990); hence, it is difficult to define educational developers and capture who they are and what they do as "there is no such thing as a typical educational developer" (Gosling, McDonald, & Stockley, 2007, p. 2). Graf, Albright, and Wheeler (1992) have identified "three different groups of developers coming into the field: (1) graduate students fulfilling assistantships, (2) experienced faculty members serving as development specialists, and (3) professional staff hired specifically for their expertise" (McDonald, 2011, p. 42). These individuals, who may enter the field by choice or by chance (Isaacs, 1997; McDonald, 2011), have different skills, knowledge, abilities, and competencies coming into their positions. The developer alternates between a number of roles, largely as a consequence of having to undertake a variety of tasks. The Professional Development committee of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD) convened the "Standards for Educational Developers Subcommittee" and charged it in late 1995 "to bring a draft of guidelines for educational developers back to the leadership of POD in order to begin discussion of its contents with the full membership or the organization" (Mintz, 1997, p. 22 as cited in Fraser, 1999, pp. 89-90). Mintz (1997) noted that the members of the subcommittee conceptualized their work differently, where some in the group described it as a:

> …body of knowledge which defines what we know, a canon for developers. Others preferred to talk about the way we do our work as opposed to accepting one canon that defines what we know. This approach emphasized the theories we subscribe to, the way we analyze the discrepancies within our work, and the lessons we learn. (p. 24 as cited in Fraser, 1999, p. 90)

For the purpose of this research, an educational developer is any individual who works with discipline and faculty-based academics, administrators, staff from other service divisions, and university management to perform the following tasks as outlined by the Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG) in the UK:

- improve teaching, learning and assessment practices in higher education;
- promote the professional development of all staff with a teaching or learning support role;
- contribute to organisational and policy development in higher education with respect to learning and teaching at institutional, regional and national levels;
- support the learning development of students; and,
- promote informed debate, research and scholarly activity relating to the above. (HEDG, 2010)

The ultimate purpose of this study is to help educational developers become more effective in their outreach to faculty. In preliminary interviews that I conducted with educational developers from three different universities (June, 2009), I found that there was a clear distinction in the way that they thought of learning and constructed teaching approaches. This observation concurs with research findings that suggest educational developers have a range of ways to interact with their client base and show different degrees of 'elasticity'. The term 'elastic practice' was coined by Carew, Lefoe, Bell, and Armour (2008), referring to the process of adapting a specific approach in response to the context and to the demands of various groups

within an institution. The idea of elastic practice is tailoring an approach for a specific context, "from the full professional 'toolkit' (techniques, experiences, ideas, values, theories) that academic developers collect during their evolution as practitioners" (Carew et al., 2008, p. 51). Elastic practice encourages the developer to become more adaptive and responsive to the faculty needs by blending various theories, techniques, and examples. Examining these learning theories, techniques, and examples is, therefore, an important place to start when designing developmental interventions aimed at improving the quality of teaching in higher education. By keeping educational developer's conceptions of learning theories in the foreground and being mindful of why they do what they do, developers can test hidden assumptions and make appropriate changes. The ultimate goal of this research is to build a snapshot, from the perspectives of educational developers in Ontario, Canada university educational development centres, on how theories of learning are being understood and the way they shape developer's practice. It is beneficial to these practitioners that they thoughtfully revisit the views they hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching, and subject their own theoretical claims and practices to analysis. Investigating the basic assumptions underlying the field is consistent with work that is judged by educators to be of scholarly significance, and more importantly will contribute to a deeper understanding of what informs developer's practice. Just as developers ask faculty members to understand why they teach as they do and how it supports student learning, they must likewise ask themselves how they expect their work to support teaching and learning development. Also, by exploring the underlying theories of learning and the way they serve as a basis for teaching outcomes, an understanding may be brought to the educational development field in general, and new learning and teaching issues that require exploration may be identified.

Research Questions

The main research question of this study is: *How do learning theories fit into educational developer's practice?* To address that question, I explored the following sub-questions:

1. What are educational developer's conceptions of theories of learning?
2. How do educational developer's learning theories shape these practitioner's work?
3. What factors influence educational developer's use of learning theories?

My Story

"You never come in an isolated way; you always come with pieces of the world attached to you" (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 53).

Qualitative research, by its very nature, eschews any notions of researcher objectivity by acknowledging the use of the researcher's preconceptions and prior experiences in interpreting and analyzing the data that is generated (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). It is important, therefore, that as the researcher, I state my background, experience and explain my personal interest and how this study came to be. Having completed my degree in life sciences at Queen's University with a minor in Italian language, I wanted to pursue a graduate program that combined sciences and education. I had very much enjoyed teaching Italian at the Italian club at my university, while obtaining my undergraduate degree. It was inspiring to have been selected and enrolled in an innovative Master of Science program that put an emphasis on training instructors to teach Anatomical Sciences. I chose this program for its concentration on sciences, as much as on adult education, having realized during my undergraduate degree that I was interested in best practices and better methods to teach. It was through this graduate program that I became aware of the Queen's University Centre for Teaching and Learning and the associated educational development community.

My positive encounters with the scholars and practitioners at that centre made me further explore educational development as a viable career path which let me to apply for and be accepted for the work study program at Queen's Centre for Teaching and Learning. My role was to help develop an online educational resource called "Focus on Foundations", which provided guidance for faculty on a variety of foundational teaching and learning topics in areas including course planning, inquiry-based learning, teaching for active and deep learning, and other best practices. While developing the "Focus on Foundations" online program, I was in a position to observe the work of educational developers as Wilcox (1997) described it, as both teachers (of other educators) and learners (of educational practice). I became more familiar with the scholarly literature guiding the field of educational development and with educational societies outside my institution. The desire to become more comfortable with the educational developer role and more knowledgeable of their practice, seeded my interest to further explore these individuals during my doctoral work.

My current position as a doctoral candidate in a department that focuses on curriculum, teaching and learning, has required that I develop extensive knowledge on issues of teaching and learning, and specifically learning theories. Furthermore, my research assistantship, focusing on conducting research on training and learning methods and evaluation programs, and my overall graduate program experience provided the impetus for this study. Focusing on learning theories is also tied back to my teaching role at Queen's University, as part of my Master's practicum, where I saw the benefits and challenges of implementing learning theories in the classroom. As a lecturer and teaching assistant of undergraduate and graduate anatomy courses, I have struggled to understand how my own theories of learning can shape my teaching practices and more effectively respond to the university context. At the same time, I value any action that enables me to improve my ability to meet the needs of my students. I also noticed that in certain institutions,

there were sessions being held by educational developers exclusively on learning theories which made me want to further investigate the role of learning theories, in the practice of educational developers.

Finally, my interest in this research is directly related to an interest I have in the success of these developers, the faculty they support, and higher institutions overall. With this research, I want to come to a better understanding of the development process and the theories involved, effectively support others, engage in meaningful dialogue with developers in the field, evaluate my work, and participate in professional learning. My study of the literature and preliminary interviews with practitioners in this field suggested to me that there was little research on learning theories amongst developers, so I initiated this study with the intention to bridge that gap.

Assumptions

At the outset of this study, it was acknowledged that the researcher as the research instrument was influential in the research process from the selection of the topic and research method, to the dynamics of the interview and interpretation of the findings. In saying this, I must also report that it was important for me, as the researcher, to "conduct a critical examination of my assumptions" (Quigley & Kuhne, 1997, p. 80).

Learning theories are clearly a subject matter that is of great interest to me both as a previous instructor and as a PhD student. I believe that learning theories are fundamental and useful in effective practice. In many respects, learning theories get to the bottom of who we are as individuals, how we learn, and what our teaching beliefs are. Although I had already formulated my own ideas in regard to the usefulness of learning theories, I believed that the

information needed to come directly from the participants. I knew that the participants came from a variety of positions within the workplace that ranged from director of the centre who makes decisions, to a research analyst who has a limited range of decision-making power. I suspected that this variation in workplace roles might not make a difference in the skills of the participants but could influence the motivation, creativity, and capacity to use learning theories. However, as I began to interact more with the study participants, I began to learn more and more about the ways individual developers used learning theories. I felt that the participants work together and support all learning endeavors, and they value the knowledge and skills that are available to them at a collective level.

The current research relied on self-reporting and claims of developers as a measure of their understanding and impact of learning theories. It was my assumption going into this study that their responses were genuine and reflected their true actions rather than encompass their aims and intentions. When I asked participants about their theories or behaviors in a certain situation, I suspected that these theories actually determined their actions and not what participants think, hope, or believe they do. I was able to analyze artifacts that educational developers had produced, and this process captured some of their day-to-day work and their use of learning theories in their everyday practice.

My decision to carry out qualitative research was also very much premised on my own personal desire to better understand developer's conceptions of learning theories, their experiences in implementing theories, and to shed some light on the complexity of this process – from the developer's perspectives. I wanted to capture their voices and represent them in the educational development literature. There is a concern with qualitative research that my biases, preconceptions, and views will have an impact in interpreting the data. The goal, however, is not

to eliminate the researcher's influence, "but to understand it and use it productively" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 91).

During the interviews, I was very aware that my presence might impact participants' responses and their overall experience in this process. I tried to remain as objective as I could, and conscious in the way I was probing or directing our conversions. Yet, there were questions I kept asking myself throughout this research such as: "Are learning theories relevant?", "Do the participants have the knowledge to implement learning theories?", and "What support do the participants need to use learning theories?" My own experience working at Queen's Centre for Teaching and Learning provided me with insight into what I needed to ask in order to collect the data that would address the questions presented in this study. Also as a researcher with extensive knowledge on learning theories, I was able to make observations that may be less noticeable to someone with a limited knowledge of the study topic. Even though, a qualitative research study tells a story from the participants' perspectives, the researcher must know how to direct the conversation and have the skills to create an atmosphere of trust and openness.

I expected that participants of this study would welcome the opportunity to discuss their learning theories with me. I assumed that my participants were eager to share their stories and that their responses were genuine. As it turned out, participants were looking forward to be interviewed and were thrilled to be given that opportunity. Ultimately, we were all engaged in a conversation "about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996, p. 14).

Study Significance

This research will draw and contribute to three fields of scholarship in higher education: professional development of educational developers, growth of the field of educational development, and credibility of educational developers.

First of all, this study aims to engage developers in critical thinking by helping them articulate what they are trying to accomplish, how they will go about accomplishing this, and based on which learning theories. The research will hopefully enable these practitioners to subject their own theoretical claims and practices to analysis and thoughtfully revisit the views they hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching. It is my belief that when developers know more about their own theories of learning, they can engage better in the process of reflection; and as a result, be more effective in supporting others. The insights and recommendations emerging from the study will represent a vehicle for the 'development of the developers' and help them reflect on the relevance and effectiveness of their learning theories.

Second, the outcomes of this study have the potential to contribute to the educational development literature that has evolved over the last decades. This study will support the growth of Canadian educational development by helping 'unpack' some of the research related to efforts aimed at understanding why developers undertake their work in the way that they do. This research contributes to the scholarship of educational development by building upon the work of other educators and researchers who have attempted to better understand the field and the work of its practitioners. The growing body of educational development literature has documented the history, services, programs, and initiatives in the field, but there has been little exploration of how learning theories inform the work of individual developers.

Finally, my research contributes to the emerging body of scholarship focused on the credibility of educational developers, and their place in academia. There is still uncertainty as to what educational developers have to offer to universities, and what constitutes their knowledge base. In his work, Rowland (1999) questions the type of theories that might guide the practice of academic developers, stating that,

> Unless those who provide such courses can begin to answer this question, it is difficult to see how they are likely to achieve the envisaged development of university teaching. Indeed, overcoming the public perception that university teaching is amateurish demands that the processes of developing university teaching be adequately conceptualized. (p. 303)

The diversity of the field invigorates the profession; however it is a challenge for educational developers coming from different disciplines to have a shared foundational understanding of the field. As McDonald (2011) noted "regardless of their entry point or professional status, individual developers potentially bring a wealth of practical knowledge about teaching and learning to their positions. What developers might lack is a basic theoretical background to make full use of their practical knowledge (Isaacs, 1997)" (p. 43). This current research study is timely, and significant, given the paradigm shift towards learning centered instruction (Åkerlind, 2007). The focus on learning is evident in the following terms, which have become quite popular: problem-based learning (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980); deep and surface approaches to learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Christensen Hughes, & Mighty, 2010); self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1987); transformative learning (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1981, 1991, 2000) or learning that lasts (Mentkowski & Associates, 2000); and, more recently threshold concepts (Meyer & Land, 2006). Understanding how Canadian educational developers are informed by learning theories will help identify some unrealized goals and discover potential new directions and visions for the field of educational development.

Thesis Overview

Chapter two provides history and context to the growth of educational development and situates the field within a Canadian university setting. Chapter three reports some of the literature on learning theories. Chapter four details the study's methodology and design. Chapter five

presents a profile of the participants, including their varied disciplinary backgrounds and pathways to the profession. The next three chapters parallel the research questions previously outlined. Chapter six describes and examines developer's conceptions of learning theories, while chapter seven outlines how learning theories fit into developer's practice. Chapter eight responds to the last research question – identifying various factors that influence developer's use (implicit or otherwise) of learning theories, and speaks to other factors that impact developer's work. Chapter nine offers further discussion and elaboration on the major findings of this study; it also presents some of the dilemmas that developers identified in their practice. Finally, chapter ten summarizes key findings, identifies some implications, and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a broad overview of the educational development field in Canada. It offers a discussion on the following sections: (1) defining educational development and building a lexicon, (2) the history of educational development in Canada, and (3) the growth and expansion of educational development practices and units.

Defining Educational Development and Building a Lexicon

The terminology used to describe educational development work varies from one country to another, to represent the various understandings of the goals, context and scope of development work. Lewis (2010) offers labels and descriptions used internationally – for example he notes that in the United States, the preferred term is faculty development and units housing development programs are known by a variety of names, including: Center for Teaching Excellence, Faculty Development Program, and Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education. In Australia and New Zealand, the field is known as academic (staff) development, while centres there have names such as Academic Development Unit, Institute for Teaching and Learning, Center for Staff Development, and so forth. In Canada and the United Kingdom, the field is mostly known as educational development and the units are labelled according to the services they provide: for example, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, The Learning and Teaching Office, Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, and so forth. Developers work with many audiences and their work ranges from curriculum design and evaluation to policy development or implementation and research, with many activities in between (Wilcox, 1997).

There is still a lack of consensus among developers when it comes to describing their efforts to improve teaching and learning. For example, Fraser (2001) reports on the divergent conceptions of the profession in her study of Australian academic developers. She found that the interviewees referred to the profession using different labels to identify themselves and describe their roles. Not only different but sometimes "diametrically opposed" conceptions of the profession were held by these individuals. The individuals interviewed in her research disagreed about the meaning of the terms academic, educational and staff development; however, they all shared the values that they bring to the profession and the sense that they work with individuals/groups/institutions to advance and support the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Even though there is ambiguity in the nomenclature, there is a general consensus in the field that improving the quality of teaching and learning is germane to the developer's mission.

The naming dilemma has impacted professional organizations and associations in the field. For example, the conference of *The International Consortium for Educational Development in Higher Education* (ICED) in 2000 carried a footnote explaining that the conference included staff and faculty development, yet surprisingly not educational development, which is part of the name of the organization (Fraser, 2001). Practitioners in the HERDSA ADSIG discussion group[1] seemed to have different opinions as to how the profession is named, "Actually I think names are important insofar as they signal to others an identity…" (Grant as cited in Fraser, 2001, p. 62). In that vein, Andresen suggested that due to considerable variation in the activities in which developers are involved,

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[1] The Academic Developers Special Interest Group, which is part of The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), is created to engage its members in online discussion on different topics (Fraser, 2001).

> it is pointless to expect to ever achieve a title that at all captures that actuality. In terms of qualifiers, the best we are going to find are broad terms that are sufficiently ambiguous to incorporate almost everyone and everything – such as "academic" and "educational" and the like, and it is a matter of merely aesthetic preference as to which one is best. (Andresen, as cited in Fraser, 2001, pp. 62-63)

Weimer (1990) argues that although "faculty development started out meaning the enhancement of teaching skill [it] soon became a more inclusive term connoting a broad range of professional activities, from support for scholarship to counselling on personal problems…that impinge on professional effectiveness" (p. xv). Indeed, early on Crow, Milton, Moomaw, and O'Connell (1976) defined faculty development as "the total development of the faculty member – as a person, as a professional and as a member of an academic community" (p. 3). Similarly, Francis (1975) considered faculty development as a process, primarily aimed at the individual level "to modify the attitudes, skills, and behavior of faculty members, toward greater competence and effectiveness in meeting student needs, their own needs, and the needs of the institution" (p. 720). Eble & Mckeachie (1985) think of faculty development as "both a comprehensive term that covers a wide range of activities ultimately designed to improve student learning and a less broad term that describes a purposeful attempt to help faculty members improve their competence as teachers and scholars" (p. 11). According to Gosling (2010) "the term development implies something more than simply change. It implies moving toward an approved goal, toward something that is valued" (p. 91). Clegg (2009) defines educational development as "a project committed to improvement and innovation, and one imbued with strong value commitments to students, their learning and the quality of teaching" (p. 409). Finally, Badly (1998 as cited in Gosling, 2001, p. 75) suggests that educational development is

"not only about improving, promoting, supporting, developing, learning and teaching, assessment and curriculum, it is also about inquiring into, investigating, and researching higher education."

Centra (1989) categorizes development in the following four types: personal (interpersonal skills, career development, and self-reflection); instructional (course design and development, and instructional technology); organizational (supporting teaching through changes in the institutional environment); and professional (supporting faculty members in their academic roles) (Amundsen et al., 2005). Diamond (2002) further conceptualized the roles of faculty, instructional, organizational, and professional development as follows: faculty development focuses on helping professors improve their teaching skills; instructional development is aimed at designing courses and curriculum in a way that support students' learning; organizational development focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of units within the institution; and educational development refers to the overall improvement resulting from the interaction of the prior three efforts (Gillespie, Robertson & Associates, 2010). A literature review on the definition of educational development (Boyer, 1990; Candy, 1996; Gosling, 2001; Gosling and D'Andrea, 2000b; Healey, 2000; Hounsell, 1994; Jenkins, 2000; Moses, 1987; Yorke, 2000), has suggested that the term seems to include the following:

1. Improving the quality of teaching and assessment practices, curriculum design – including the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning;
2. Professional development of academic staff;
3. Organizational and policy development;
4. Support for effective student learning;
5. Informed debate and critical dialogue about teaching and learning, the curriculum, assessment, and the goals of higher education;

6. Promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning and research into higher education goals and practices. (Gosling, 2001)

The term educational development was established with the formation of the Educational Developers Caucus in Canada (a community of practice) in June 2003 (Mighty, 2006), as the community decided to re-conceptualize the labels used in describing the field (McDonald, 2011). This label was selected to recognize "the growing breadth of programs, practices, and conceptualizations of the field; the development goals and approaches broadly associated with it; and the expanding client base" (McDonald, 2011, pp. 17-18), and the focus on a developmental approach. Even before, Wilcox (1998) referred to it as educational development, "since the overall intention of this work is to improve the quality of education, teaching and learning, through a development process" (p. 1) and described this term as being more "generic" and "inclusive." Felten, Kalish, Pingree, and Plank (2007) also consider educational development as the most inclusive term to describe "a profession dedicated to helping colleges and universities function effectively as teaching and learning communities" (p. 93) and have argued for its use. As previously mentioned the term has been adopted internationally by the International Consortium of Educational Developers and by many other scholars in the field (see Andresen, 1996; Gosling, 1996; Fraser, 1999; Fraser, Gosling, & Sorcinelli, 2010).

Jerry Gaff, William Bergquist, and Steven Phillips were among the first to conceptualize the field and offer many names and practices commonly associated with educational development, hence the origins of many terms associated with development work can be attributed to them (McDonald, 2011). Borrowing from the work of Watson and Johnson (1972), Bergquist and Phillips proposed a model where change can take place within three domains: structure, process, and attitude. Changes in s*tructure* involve modifications in the reward system,

use of space, organizational chart, or institutional policies. Changes in *process*, by contrast, involve shifts in the way people operate, interact, or communicate within the organization. *Attitude* changes entail modifications in the values, assumptions, philosophies that underlie the organizational culture. For each of those domains Bergquist and Phillips' (1975) propose three components – personal development, instructional development, and organizational development. Similarly, in his work, Gaff (1975) identified and categorized faculty development into three major components: faculty, instructional, and organizational. Gaff began his book, *Toward faculty renewal: Advances in faculty, instructional, and organizational development* with the attempt to respond to a fundamental and enduring question, "How can teaching be improved?" (p. ix). Alstete (2000) states that "an important difference between the two models is that Gaff believes that any of the three aspects (personal, instructional, and organizational) can be implemented without reference to the other two" meanwhile "Bergquist and Phillips believe that all three elements should be present in a mature faculty development program" (p. 36).

The relatively fast evolution of teaching support programs noted that the term educational development had evolved, as had the field, into a broader term meant to encompass aspects of the wide array of duties taken on by these individuals. Today, the competing demands placed upon faculty members and the complexity of their duties, and the complexities of the roles and responsibilities of those who support them, continue to evolve at a rapid pace. This will be reflected in our evolving understanding of what constitutes educational development and in the terms that we use to describe the field.

History of Educational Development in Canada

This section reports the emergence and growth of educational development in Canada, including its history, influential people, and key events. Universities in Canada have a long history of commitment to the development and success of faculty members in all of their

academic roles, yet many faculty are unaware that educational development centres exist (Wilcox, 1997). This author noted that even though she cites the Smith report (1991) "as if it were the first notable event in terms of attention to teaching at Canadian universities, academics have been quietly working away on campuses across the country to initiate and provide educational development programs since the 1960s" (p. 28). Educational development began to emerge in the Canadian higher education scene in the social and economic turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Shore, 1974; Wilcox, 1997). It occurred "at a particular period in time, in response to certain conditions specific university settings… promoted by individuals with particular backgrounds, skills and interests" (Wilcox, 1997, p. 1). This initiative was mainly in response to a range of widespread changes and pressures that were placed upon the academia. Examples of such tensions include: rising concerns about the quality of university teaching and teachers competencies, student rights movements, various economic pressures and constraints, and growing societal and governmental concern with accountability and quality assurance (Åkerlind, 2005; Anderson & Eaton 1982a, b; Moses, 1988; Kogan, Moses, & El-Khawas, 1994; Schuller, 1995; Smyth, 1995). The movement developed earlier in Britain, Australia, and the U.S., and due to the close ties that Canada traditionally had with Britain and because many new faculty hired in Canada were Americans at the time, these countries' influences in Canada were particularly strong (Wilcox, 1997). This made it easier for Canada to keep current with the teaching improvement efforts made elsewhere (Wilcox, 1997). Those individuals who were aware that educational development existed acted as advocates in informing others and establishing services and committees with the goal of improving the quality of teaching; some faculty went on to do educational work either at their own institutions or at the provincial and national level (Wilcox, 1997).

With student protests "attack[ing] irrelevant courses and uninspired teaching" (Gaff & Simpson, 1994, p. 168), parents criticizing the educational system, and legislators questioning the quality of higher education, a renewed interest in teaching and learning emerged. The emphasis on educational development was, in part, a reaction to the criticism and changes aimed at improving the quality of instruction and ultimately student learning. Hence, developers joined forces with educational institutions to address the changing conditions and champion some of the innovations in higher education. With the advent of the student rights movement across higher education in Canada, students demanded to evaluate teachers on their teaching. Assessing the teaching competence of faculty members was one of the priorities for developers. As Wilcox (1997) writes, "if there was a single issue in Canada that focused people's attention on educational development at the time, it was the evaluation of teaching" (p. 31). Al Berland, then executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers emphasized the lack of training of professors by noting that "university professors never got any orientation to their professional responsibilities as academics" (Knapper in Wilcox 1997, p. 40). The advancement of educational technology also contributed to initiating educational development efforts (Konrad, 1983).

According to Knapper (2013), there is some debate around which teaching unit opened first in Canada; however, he notes the opening of the Centre for Learning and Development at McGill University in the late 1960s, as one of the earliest and most important in formalizing educational development in Canada. By 1974 more than 13 universities and 65 colleges across Canada had units and committees dedicated to instructional improvement (Shore, 1974). Bruce Shore considered these numbers as "undoubtedly an underestimate" as only a year earlier a survey of instructional improvement practice, the first of its kind in Canada, estimated that more than 270 offices and individuals were offering pedagogical services at Canadian colleges,

universities, and agencies (Shore & Donald, 1974). Those practices were described by Shore (1974) as “irregular” and “haphazard”, providing only a limited range of services.

It wasn’t until the late 1970s that Ontario initiated educational development efforts with the establishment of the Ontario Universities Programme for Instructional Development (OUPID) (Scarfe, 2004). OUPID was founded with the purpose to be seen as “a central effort to develop teaching in all Ontario’s sixteen provincially funded universities” (Elrick 1990, p. 65). It was Bernard Trotter, who in 1970 prepared a report, titled *Television and Technology in University Teaching*, for the Committee on University Affairs (CUA) and the Council of Ontario Universities or COU (Elrick, 1990; Wilcox, 1997). In this report, he concluded that “we must aim at nothing less than fundamental review of the instructional process” (p. 2) and further recommended that the universities of Ontario establish a single centre of educational development. It took two years of negotiations for COU and the CUA to agree to this approach, which resulted in the creation of a province-wide program for Ontario institutions "to assist faculties in Ontario universities in improving the effectiveness of instructional processes by systematic development of objectives, content, methods and evaluation for each course offered with economy in the application of instructional resources” (Wilcox, 1997, p. 45). OUPID officially opened its doors in 1973 with the intention of implementing a research grant approach to development; individuals at Ontario universities competed for funds to take part in educational development initiatives (Wilcox, 1997). The successive director of OUPID, Fred Parrett (1976), wrote that the “long-term objective of the province-wide program is to ensure the continued and visible commitment to improving teaching and learning at an individual university level, and when a university has made little organized effort in this direction, to encourage its development…” (Parrett as cited in Wilcox, 1997, p. 45). As quoted in McDonald (2011) “examples of projects and activities funded by OUPID, included: (1) research initiatives, study

leaves, and conference attendance to develop expertise in instructional development; (2) development of instructional materials; and (3) train-the-trainer type workshops (Elrick, 1990; Wilcox, 1997a)" (p. 29). Although the program formally came to an end in 1980 as its funds dried up, it had an important and lasting effect. While many developers saw OUPID as crucial in legitimizing educational development and a valuable endeavour in improving faculty teaching; others considered it to be a lost opportunity (Wilcox, 1997). Elrick (1990) notes that there were many fundamental problems with OUPID, including: lack of a clearly articulated plan, limited funding, the distribution of funds, and ignoring academic traditions and values. As she concludes, "what can be learned from OUPID, and programmes like it, is that attempts to develop teaching must agree with and extend academic values if they are to make widespread changes in university teaching" (Elrick, 1990. p. 76). Yet, it had a lasting legacy in that it created a network of educational developers who were interested in the same issues in higher education and those individuals were given opportunities through various committees, workshops, conferences to share best practices (Wilcox, 1997).

At that time, many individual developers who were engaged in educational development activities felt it necessary to be supported by their colleagues in this new endeavour. They started forming regional groups and created a network that enabled them to feel less isolated and part of a wider enterprise with a common purpose and vision. Individuals in those universities who had a permanent instructional unit went beyond informal encounters to hosting a formal annual meeting where they could meet and discuss their work (McDonald, 2011). In the fifth annual meeting at the University of Ottawa, they charged a small conference registration fee for those attending to help launch the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) (Knapper, 1985). The conference was very well attended, attracting 70-80 academics (Wilcox, 1997). This immediate success helped STLHE establish itself as a vital organization contributing to the

teaching and learning in Canadian higher education. STLHE consists of a vibrant community of people including: university and college faculty, educational developers, administrators, 3M National Teaching Fellows, and students (STLHE, 2012). It has thousands of members who contribute to the Ca*nadian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (CJSoTL); the *Green Guides* series on special topics; the *STLHE Newsletter*; and the *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching* (CELT), which is now in its fourth year. The ten goals that drive its vision and strategic direction are:

- to support and advance teaching and learning in higher education,
- to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and networking opportunities,
- to provide opportunities for professional development,
- to facilitate and disseminate research on teaching and learning,
- to recognize and reward contributions to teaching excellence, educational leadership, innovation, service and mentorship in higher education,
- to collaborate with like-minded teacher and student groups and organizations in Canada and abroad,
- to shape, influence and lead policy decisions that enhance teaching and learning in higher education at local, national and international levels,
- to carry out the work of the Society in Canada's two official languages,
- to extend the work of the Society through the creation of Teaching and Learning Canada, a charitable foundation,
- to actively engage student participation in all aspects of the Society's work. (STLHE, 2012)

STLHE is a leader in the teaching and learning community, addressing local, regional and national issues in post-secondary education. The annual conference of STLHE is now in its 33rd

year, and is being held at various institutions across the country. The Society had been an instant success and had the support of Canada's 3M president, an individual who was very interested in university teaching (Knapper, in Wilcox, 1997). John Myser, the president of 3M Canada in 1985, saw in the individuals of the society "a progressive group of teachers brushing cobwebs from the Ivory Tower and replacing them with new and innovative teaching ideas" (Ahmad, Stockley, & Moore, 2013, p. 183). This resulted in STLHE and 3M Canada joining forces to reward exceptional contributions to teaching and learning in Canadian universities, leading to the establishment of the 3M National Fellowship program. There are 278 university professors scattered throughout Canada, representing a broad range of disciplines, who have been honoured by this program (Ahmad et al., 2013). The 3M Fellowship program served "to legitimize teaching and educational development work, and to raise the profile of STLHE" (Wilcox, 1997, p. 51, underline in original).

There are other organizations and groups that are playing a crucial role in the educational development field and in enhancing teaching and learning in higher education, including:

(1) the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC);

(2) the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT);

(3) the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education (CSSHE);

(4) the Educational Developers Caucus (EDC); and

(5) the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO).

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada is a national organization of universities working closely with governments, private sector and the public with a mission to promote university research and raise the profile of higher education in general (AUCC, 2012). It has its roots in 1911, and was originally named the National Conference of Canadian Universities and described as the "the voice and conscience of Canada's institutions of higher learning"

(AUCC, 2012). Its influential publication, University Affairs, serves to disseminate "news, commentary, in-depth articles on a wide range of topics, and career advice for academics…[it] is also the largest source of career ads for people seeking academic positions in Canada" (AUCC, 2012). In 1991, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education, known also as the Smith Report, was commissioned by AUCC (Smith 1991) – a critical document to educational developers and higher education stakeholders broadly. One of the recommendations in the Smith Report indicates that "faculty development activities should receive a fixed, substantial portion of the university budget, with money made available to expand instructional development offices (or create them where they do not exist) and to fund pedagogical innovations" (Smith, 1991, p. 65). The report "represents an important contribution by Dr. Smith and his associates to the assessment of quality in the education being provided by Canadian universities today" (Dr. Petersen, as cited in Smith, 1991, p. ii).

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is Canada's academic staff association. Being the "national voice" for faculty and with more than 66,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, and other academic professionals, it serves as "an outspoken defender of academic freedom and works actively in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada" (CAUT, 2012). The organization, founded in 1951, was concerned with the lack of preparation of faculty for their different roles, especially teaching; it had an initial interest in evaluating teaching and finding new ways to measure effectiveness (Wilcox, 1997). To address these concerns, a Professional Orientation Committee was created by CAUT in 1970 (Knapper, 2013). The committee acknowledged that "[n]o requirements for the specific function of teaching are set for those entering the profession, nor with very few exceptions are there systematic procedures for assisting new members of the profession in undertaking their teaching responsibilities" (Knapper, 2013, p. 55). The Association's most important contribution to the

educational development community was its work on the Teaching Dossier, culminating in the publication of *The CAUT Guide to the Teaching Dossier: Its Preparation and Use* (Shore et al., 1986). Teaching dossiers, also referred to as teaching portfolios, have become an increasingly popular way for faculty in universities across North America to document teaching effectiveness, both for self-improvement and for tenure and promotion decisions. Besides CAUT's first publication on dossiers, the Association provides the *CAUT Bulletin* – a national newspaper available to its subscribers – in addition to offering other services.

The formation of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education (CSSHE) in 1970 was another initiative of relative significance to the educational development community. While the society has as its broad purpose "the advancement of knowledge of postsecondary education through the dissemination through publication and learned meetings" (CSSHE, 2012), its goal also includes conducting research on effective teaching and improving university teaching. A significant venue for the dissemination of this type of research has been the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (CJHE), published by the society. Wilcox (1997) reported that the journal published approximately 37 articles from 1971 to 1974, from which the majority were prepared and written by educational researchers interested in improving teaching and learning in higher education. The *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* continues to be a prestigious, peer-reviewed venue that publishes manuscripts on topics relevant to the educational development field and to the Canadian higher education system (McDonald, 2011).

The Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) is an important organization established to facilitate advancement and evolution of the educational development field and its practitioners (EDC, 2012). The Caucus was created in 2003, through a constitutional amendment of the STLHE, and consolidated three years later with the development of the EDC By-Laws (Mighty,

2006). EDC "defines itself as a community of practice with a mission to work within the aims and structure of the STLHE" to achieve the following goals:

- 3.2.1 to strengthen the position of STLHE as the professional/academic organization of choice for educational developers, and particularly for those practicing in Canada;
- 3.2.2 to pursue the aims of STLHE with particular attention to their application in educational development contexts;
- 3.2.3 to provide leadership in the professionalization of the educational development role;
- 3.2.4 to foster the advancement and evolution of educational development as a field of practice and scholarship;
- 3.2.5 to create a national forum where emerging and problematic educational development issues can be candidly discussed;
- 3.2.6 to create a collegial network within which information, strategies, and resources can be shared;
- 3.2.7 to facilitate communication among educational developers who are members of STLHE;
- 3.2.8 to provide professional development opportunities for experienced, new and potential educational developers; and
- 3.2.9 to advocate, through STLHE, for educational development issues at a national level. (EDC, 2012, pp. 1-2)

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) is one of the more recent establishments in the Canadian higher education landscape. It was created in 2005 through the HEQCO Act as an "arm's-length agency of the Government of Ontario that brings evidence-based research to the continued improvement of the postsecondary education system in Ontario" (HEQCO, 2012). Its mandate is to conduct evaluations on the post-secondary sector, conduct

research, and provide decision-makers with policy recommendations to ensure that Ontario's colleges and universities are accessible, offer higher quality programs and are accountable to all individuals (HEQCO, 2012). HEQCO has collaborated with postsecondary research institutions, and public and non-profit organizations, as well as, with the educational development community, to make recommendations in improving the quality of teaching in Ontario colleges and universities. This Council has played a vital role for the educational development community, as they have collaborated with HEQCO's research team in bringing new perspectives to the improvement of higher education in Ontario (McDonald, 2011).

The 1990s brought additional cries for reform in Canadian higher education with the quality assurance movement and the need to shift the university culture from being more teacher-centered to one that is more student-centered. In their study, which focuses on measuring quality in post-secondary education, Ross Finnie and Alex Usher (2005) point out the controversial nature of the debate on quality:

> Many of these attempts to measure "quality" have been met by suspicion and hostility by the educational institutions being measured; with some justification, they have pointed out that most of the very simple output indicators used by governments to measure quality tend not to take into account factors such as differences in locality, academic selectivity and the choice of courses offered at the institution. Debates on quality therefore tend to end up in mutual suspicion and recrimination: governments tend to think of institutions as unwilling to make themselves accountable, and institutions (especially universities) tend to think of governments as dangerously simpleminded if not actually Philistine. (p.1)

Based on the work of Finnie and Usher (2005), Saunders (2006) suggests the following five approaches to measure quality: auditing programs, usually at a departmental level, to ensure that the expectations have been met; collecting data on various characteristics of the schools, and

generating a quality ranking; implementing key performance indicators; regularly setting goals and checking progress; and, measuring different aspects of the learning environment. An example of the latter approaches is the National Survey of Student Engagement, which collects data on students' participation in programs and activities offered at their institutions (NSSE, 2013). At the heart of all these initiatives, has been bringing teaching and learning to the forefront and a quest for both quality and excellence.

In the last 20 years, universities and colleges have experienced a radical shift; they have actively participated to implement best practices, innovative teaching approaches, and ways to approach teaching and learning. At the same time, educational development has "moved from being marginal and relatively low profile in many institutions to a more central and influential position" (Candy, 1996, p. 7) which has helped position educational developers with a unique role in championing and managing some of these changes. As Robert Boice (1992), a psychologist, and faculty developer notes,

> Until recently, faculty development entailed little more than sabbaticals, travel funds, newsletter and inspirational workshops…But changes in academe have necessitated changes in faculty development. Not long ago, faculty development was defined as the part-time endeavor of administrators who invited workshop speakers and awarded funds or leaves. Now, it requires specialists with skills in working with colleagues on processes including departmental chairing, recruitment, retention, mentoring, research, scholarship, writing and teaching. (p. 97)

The claim that educational developers have "gained ascendancy in higher education" (Malcolm & Zukas, 2000, p. 8) indicates the central role that educational developers play today in supporting teaching and learning at institutions. As the field of educational development is building capacity in the Canadian higher education scene, new practitioners are joining the

educational development community. This is evidenced by the number of "developers attending the EDC's annual conference; the number of members participating in the EDC listserv… and the number of new centres opening across the country" (McDonald, 2011, p. 39). Similarly, Sorcinelli and her associates (2006) found that more than 50% of primarily Canadian and American developers had five or fewer years of relevant work experience, indicating a growth in the field as well. These data suggest a rapidly growing constellation of educational developers and a greater appreciation of their roles. As Svinicki and Wehlburg (2010) argued, "Educational development is an important area of research, study and practice in higher education. Over the last several decades, this area has moved from a relatively individualistic approach to being a collaborative and scholarly field" in the postsecondary landscape.

The Growth and Expansion of Educational Development Practices and Units

Wilcox (1997) describes the work of a new educational developer similar to someone arriving late at a party – it takes some time to familiarize oneself with what has been going on before your arrival. As developers enter the field from many routes, it is an ongoing challenge for new practitioners then, discovering their own orientations to practice as well as navigating their role, their institution, and the community of educational development overall. Just as there are many definitions of educational development, "there is no one way to do educational development" (McDonald, 2011, p. 21). Over the years, there has been a shift in the faculty development programs from providing remedial support to individual faculty members to meeting institutional and sector needs (Fletcher & Patrick, 1998). This transition has shifted the role of the educational developer from the periphery to the centre of the institution as these practitioners "are increasingly looked on as essential resource for leading change within the academy" (Dawson, Mighty, & Britnell, 2010, p. 70). The variations in "centre staffing and delivery structures (Wright, 2002), position requirements (Dawson, Britnell, & Hitchcock, 2010;

Wright & Miller, 2000), organizational priorities and individual faculty needs (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy & Beach, 2006) and program mandates" (McDonald, 2011, p. 41) across universities are reflected in the different approaches that educational developers take to their practice. The same diversity is seen in describing the evolving models of educational development.

Hicks (1999) identified four models of development: central, dispersed, mixed and integrated. The central or the traditional model is characterized by a strong central unit serving the entire institution. According to Smith (1991) a 'typical' Canadian unit consists of offices which "frequently publish newsletters, hold seminars, invite speakers and disseminate information on innovative teaching. As a rule the centres are small, with a permanent staff of one, and have very limited financial resources" (p. 58). Donald & Shore (1976) describe these units as "supplying information and acting as a clearinghouse for information on various topics" (p. 6). When Sorcinelli and her associates (2006) reported on the main models for the delivery of faculty development, they identified the central model to continue to be the dominant structure (54%) for campus-wide units. The dispersed model has educational developers work in departments and "is likely to be accompanied by policy to encourage such activity within the institution" (Hicks, 1999, p. 47). Hick's (1999) mixed model aims to combine the best of both worlds having a central and at the same time discipline-specific initiatives; the integrated model he proposed is termed as "holistic" in form where teaching is supported through a series of strategies that incorporate elements from the mixed model.

The variety of approaches to instructional improvement across Canada was first documented by Shore and Donald (1974) when they surveyed pedagogical services in colleges, universities, and agencies. They initially identified 13 universities offering some sort of organized program or a set of pedagogical activities for faculty development; that number increased to 22 universities after their follow-up survey in 1975-1976. Those approaches

included evaluation and course improvement consultations, workshops, and publications. Meanwhile, the methods given highest priority in the Foster and Nelson (1980) survey were workshops on teaching techniques with outside consultants and speakers. Similarly, when Konrad (1983) conducted a survey during 1981-82 to describe the nature of faculty development practices in Canadian universities and their perceived effectiveness he noted that, "workshops dealing with instructional techniques, testing, and new or different curricular approaches were among the best attended and most effective" (p. 18). Indeed, the survey findings suggest that academics identified as their most pressing faculty development needs to be instructional improvement, rather than personal or organizational development (Konrad, 1983). These efforts which "included activities designed to help faculty sharpen or update their skills as teachers, researchers, academic advisors and as professionals" (Konrad, 1983, p. 15) seemed to be the focus in other institutions as well and considered a "cornerstone of instructional development since the 1970s" (Scarfe 2004, p. 3).

In 1986, a replication of Donald and Shore's study showed subtle changes in teaching improvement activities. The number of universities – 30 universities – providing faculty development services in Canada remained the same since Konrad's (1983) survey. The greatest change over the previous decade was in the number of services for graduate students – this period of time had witnessed an increase in the number of programs to prepare graduate students to teach. Likewise, that same period of time had seen recognition in university teaching by establishing awards for teaching excellence. Still, the types of predominant practices were consistent with those listed in previous surveys and continued to focus on basic instructional skills, emphasizing teaching rather than learning (Sullivan 1986 as cited in Donald, 1986).

In addition, a searchable database, which maps the activities of educational development centres in Canadian colleges and universities, is available from the EDC website

(www.edcaucus.ca). The database was the result of an initiative undertaken by a group of educational developers "to describe the demographics and practices of Canadian post-secondary (university and college) Educational Development (ED) centres, with the overall intention of gathering and compiling sharable information" (Simmons et al., 2008, p. 1). The study was conducted in subsequent phases in 2008-2009 and involved a survey of centre directors and other development staff. The database, which was revised in February 2012, contains complete information of 42 centres; it clearly indicates that the centre practices have increased in number and scope.

Recently, as part of her doctoral research, Mary Wilson (2012) conducted an analysis of the instructional development literature in higher education from 2000 to 2009. While her meta-study focused on the relationship between instructional development approaches and effective teaching outcomes, her findings revealed that there was still a focus on individual change rather than departmental or organizational change. It is interesting to note that she identified only few examples of research studies designed to evaluate theories or contribute to the development of theory. She argues that what is mainly documented from the research studies is a body of literature limited to a single type of research, evaluation research. This type of research will not "lead to increased coherence and depth in the field. Increasingly rigorous evaluations could lead to deeper understandings of particular circumstances, but are not likely to enhance theoretical development that could be broadly applicable" (Wilson, 2012, p. 110).

Developers nowadays act in a variety of roles (e.g., curriculum developer, facilitator, change agent), and interact with a range of audiences (e.g., faculty members, graduate students, administrators, technology experts, provosts and deans). Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) go on to enumerate the goals of educational developers, which include: respond to and support individual faculty members and departments, advance new initiatives in teaching and

learning, foster collegiality within and among faculty members and departments, act as change agent, and reward teaching excellence. In this vein, Fraser (2005) concluded that critical to understanding the role of educational developers is to recognize,

> the multi-layered context in which [they] work, the complex structures that both support and constrain [their] work, and the variety of processes and strategies that [they] develop to engage teachers, the university, and the higher education sector in educational development. (p. 1)

All of these developments have enabled the field to build capacity and achieve a new level of maturity. As Sorcinelli and Austin (2010) rightly said, “educational development is a key strategic lever for ensuring institutional quality and supporting institutional change around the globe” (p. 25).

CHAPTER THREE: LEARNING THEORIES

I want to talk about learning. But not the lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff that is crammed in to the mind of the poor helpless individual tied into his seat by ironclad bonds of conformity! I am talking about LEARNING - the insatiable curiosity that drives the adolescent boy to absorb everything he can see or hear or read about gasoline engines in order to improve the efficiency and speed of his 'cruiser'. I am talking about the student who says, "I am discovering, drawing in from the outside, and making that which is drawn in a real part of me." I am talking about any learning in which the experience of the learner progresses along this line: "No, no, that's not what I want"; "Wait! This is closer to what I am interested in, what I need"; "Ah, here it is! Now I'm grasping and comprehending what I need and what I want to know!" (Rogers, 1983, pp. 18-19, as cited in Smith, 2003)

Introduction

Definitions and conceptions of learning have been around for over 2000 years as people have been trying to understand this complex process. Throughout recorded history, learning has played an important role in cultures around the world and learning theorists have carried out debates on how people learn that can be dated back to some Greek philosophers including, Socrates (468-399 B.C.), Plato (427-347 B.C.), and Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) (Darling-Hammond Austin, Orcutt, & Rosso, 2001). Schoenfeld (1999) noted "... that the very definition of learning is contested, and that assumptions that people make regarding its nature and where it takes place also vary widely" (p. 6). Great strides have been made toward understanding the nature of learning, but there is still a long way to go in fully comprehending this complex, unpredictable and dynamic process. The same debates about the purposes of education and how to encourage learning reoccur today (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001). Many approaches and perspectives have been applied to study learning, the most popular being (a) behavioral (stimulus-response behaviour); (b) cognitive (cognitive constructs and mental processes); (c) constructive (knowledge is constructed by the learner); (d) human (the focus is on the whole person and the uniqueness of each individual); and, (e) critical (the learner as critiquing the society) (Weibell,

2011). Theories of learning, theories of instruction, theories of instructional design, and methods of teaching have emerged from all the above perspectives (Weibell, 2011). Theories are described as abstract principles, which underlie empirical relationships, providing a rationale for them (Phillips, 1976). Theories of learning:

> provide systematic, well-delineated ways of describing and explaining the teaching/learning process, often with the support of a distinct vocabulary representative of underlying epistemological and ontological perspectives…In addition to furnishing an organized and structured way of looking at teaching and learning, many theories and taxonomies of learning also provide characteristic vocabularies, often metaphorical, that reflect their underlying epistemologies. (Young, 2008, p. 43)

Meanwhile Popper (2002) describes theory as the process of abstraction and conceptualization whose function is to "rationalize, to explain and to master" (p. 59). In quoting the work of Hull (1935), Margaret Gredler (2001) summarized the following three properties that constitute a well-constructed theory: 1) an explicit set of assumptions are embedded in theories; 2) there is an explicit definition of key terms in the theory; and 3) the role of the assumptions is so that the theorist can derive testable prepositions, which are another criteria in theory construction. While the three aforementioned characteristics apply to theory in any discipline, a theory of learning should also seek to explain the nature of learning and the underlying dynamics of events associated with learning (Gredler, 2001).

> A learning theory is a systematic explanation of the process by which people gain knowledge, comprehension, and mastery regarding themselves and their environments. While knowledge, comprehension, and mastery are rather abstract concepts, they do imply somewhat more concrete concepts. Knowledge implies information;

> comprehension implies understanding; and mastery implies the ability to use something to achieve a purpose. (Vojtecky, 1984, p. 247)

Many adult learning theories share a basic premise about learning that focuses on the changes that occur in the learner as a result of an active learning process. This process of learning involves critical reflection and empowers the learner to understand the learning within a relevant context and then apply the new learning (Freire, 1970; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1997). Learning theories develop assumptions about learning, test the propositions through research, specify conditions under which learning takes place, and recommend events related to learning in both formal and informal settings. Learning theories help to understand the process of learning so that more appropriate learning programs can be designed based on such understanding. As Hill (1977) has observed,

> For most of us, learning theories have two chief values. One is in providing us with vocabulary and a conceptual framework for interpreting the examples of learning that we observe. The other, closely related, is in suggesting where to look for solutions to practical problems. The theories do not give us solutions, but they do direct our attention to those variables that are crucial in finding solutions. (p. 261 as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p. 125)

In his work, John Phillips (1981) wrote in great detail about the problematic nature of theories. He presents four types of problems with theories: defining them, determining theories, recognizing that observations are not pure, and the impossibility of proving that our theories are correct. Regarding the first dilemma, there are basic disagreements among professionals in various disciplines about the nature of phenomena, methodology, definitions of theory, and about what should be the focal concerns of theories (Benton, 1978; Phillips, 1976). This becomes

obvious if we simply consider ‘the why’ of human behaviour and how different fields provide various kinds of answers to these questions:

> Psychoanalytic theorists, for example, have concentrated on unconscious processes, asserting that people’s behavior is determined by a complex interaction between their unconscious drives and the environment. Cognitive psychologists believe that people decide what to do, so they have concentrated on thought processes. They consider the way people process information and make choices about what to do. Humanistic psychologists, like cognitive theorists, believe that humans are active organisms making continual choices about what to do. Unlike cognitive theorists, however, humanists have been less concerned with thought processes and more concerned with the ’wholeness of a person’; that is, the inner force and phenomenological experience of people…Finally, behaviorists are concerned with the mechanistic associative links which develop between stimuli and responses through reinforcement of a response in the presence of a stimulus. (Deci, 1975, pp. 3-4)

Second, is acknowledging that it is not the ‘facts’, which determine our theories, but the other way around – our theories determine what we take to be facts (Phillips, 1981). Deci (1975) gives the $10 bill example to demonstrate this point:

> A person happens to look down one day and finds a $10 bill on the street. After that he spends more time looking down. A behaviouristic interpretation of this behaviour would be that the response of looking down was reinforced by the $10 - with the result that the response recurs more frequently. The person does not decide to do it, it happens because of the strengthening of associations between stimuli (e.g. presence of the street, etc.) and the response (i.e. looking down). A cognitive interpretation, on the other hand, would be that the person values money, and he decides because of

> finding the $10, that he may find money more often if he looks down more, and the behaviour follows the decision. The data can help to substantiate either theory, but they cannot prove that a person's decisions affect, or do not affect, his behaviour. They do not really help give us the essence of the answer to why the person looks down more. (pp. 7-8)

Third, according to Phillips (1981) we need to recognize: "That our observations are not pure. They are [instead] the product of our ideas (our theories or conceptual themes), our perceptual skills (what we have learned to discriminate), [and] our sensory limitations" (p. 95). The author gives the example of 'writing' and how we cannot identify something as writing (for instance, an individual from a pre-literature society) without the concept of 'writing' (recognizing the physical movement). We cannot simply rely on our observations of reality, as we have no means of knowing how correctly they reflect it. Finally, it is impossible to prove that our theories "are either true or false in an absolute sense" (Phillips, 1981, p. 96).

Applying Theories into Practice

We *act* on the basis of what we *know*. That knowledge may be the recipe or perhaps habit kind, following the latest fashion, conducting empirical generalizations that connect one "observable" phenomenon to another, or it might involve a theoretical component, which underlies empirical relationships, providing a rationale for them (Phillips, 1981). Learning theories often seem to arise from the particular context, demands, uncertainties, complexities, and ambiguities of educational practice. Immanuel Kant's (1793) wrote about the disconnect between theory and practice in his essay *On the common saying: This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice*. Pointing out the gap between theory and practice, was Kant's response after being annoyed that a man named Garve had criticized Kant's ethical theory based on this ground (Rachels, 2001).

To apply theories to practice, one needs to understand theories not simply as a way of thinking, but as principles that have been tested and are capable of informing practical judgments of educators. A theory is modified over time based on the insights of practitioners as well as the work of researchers. Various theories describe different, interrelated parts of a more comprehensive learning process, and often come together to form a more connected whole (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001). Even though, they do not provide us with solutions, they are helpful in directing our attention at variables that impact our practice while providing some rationale for it. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) express it, "what teachers need to do is to dip into a deep basket of intersecting theories, research, and personal as well as professional knowledge and decide how they come together in their work" (p. 18).

Early efforts have been made by educational psychologists to develop a connection between learning theories and the practical application of theories in educational settings. In particular, Dewey's (1910) pragmatic view of education, considers the goal of inquiry to be the process of solving practical problems. Such inquiries into teaching and learning call for a special linking between learning theory and educational practice. Similarly, in his seminal book *Toward a theory of instruction*, Bruner (1966) makes a profound contribution to the process of formulating theories that are anchored in practice. Edward Thorndike (1913) developed a body of learning principles (e.g. the laws of effect, exercise, and readiness) that could be directly applied to the teaching process. Thorndike, laws of exercise in particular, speak to the iterative process of integrating theories to practice – connections become strengthened with practice and weakened when practice is discontinued.

Marilla Svinicki (1991) noted that theories can be applied for two purposes: they can be used as a basis for revising current instructional methods, or as a stimulus for new methods. The author further acknowledges that "most currently used instructional methods were not developed

out of research and theory. They arose out of tradition, familiarity, and administrative necessity (Svinicki, 1991, p. 111). She adds that, that doesn't necessarily make them wrong; however, those methods could be greatly improved if they were to be examined in light of theories. Theories are important in offering ways of tackling a problem and thinking about particular situations. Each theory follows "…a slightly different path, using slightly different data, and tackling slightly different aspects of teaching and learning. Each one offers different insights into the possibilities for teaching, but they all fit together nicely and support one another" (Svinicki, 1991, p. 118). Ultimately viewing a situation from the perspectives of different theories helps create new or innovative instructional methods (Svinicki, 1991). Each of these theories has the power to explain how people learn, and the context in which learning takes place. Each theory is based on different assumptions and emphasizes different aspects of the learning process, yet each offers a unique and valuable perspective.

In terms of which theories to choose, Phillips (1981) notes that "consensus among experts in the field may be a good guide; where such 'consensus' is lacking, we must use other criteria" (p. 98). The author suggests that what could help us make a choice is to examine the assumptions, methodology and concepts that are embedded in a theory. We have our bedrock beliefs that we can modify based on evidence and what we consider as evidence that is well-grounded and convincing depends on our assumptions. Assumptions are very important since "... the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn" (Wittgenstein 1974, p. 40).

> And our knowledge – whether of a common sense kind, or consisting of full-blown scientific theories – will involve assumptions: First, assumptions about the nature of reality, about what is (ontological assumptions); second, about the sort of knowledge available to us (epistemological assumptions); third, about human nature and how we

> interact to produce society; fourth, about what constitutes acceptable forms of explanation and inquiry. (Phillips, 1981, p. 94)

In addition, Phillips (1981) notes the importance of considering the methodology in inquiry and the extent to which the methods used are compatible with the theoretical approach adopted. Assumptions are like premises of an argument that lead to a certain conclusion and concepts to explain what the issue is, while methodology provides the base for its prepositions and explain the process through which those particular conclusions are reached. Another criterion would be to critically look at the concepts used in an argument or theory and make the distinction between theoretical and empirical, or observable concepts (Phillips, 1981). When we analyze theories based on the criteria outlined above, "we have a basis for judging which approach is likely to be both effective and morally acceptable" (Phillips, 1981, p. 101).

Christensen and Osguthorpe (2004) surveyed instructional designers to reveal the strategies that these practitioners use to make decisions. They found that only fifty percent of instructional designers use theories in their decision-making processes. Those that do seem to borrow elements of different theories, and then combine them in an eclectic manner (Christensen & Osguthorpe, 2004; Yanchar, Slife, & Warne, 2008; Yanchar & South, 2009). This trend of combining theories can be problematic since "practitioners may be haphazardly generating new theories on the fly in a rather undisciplined manner" (Weibell, 2011, p. 2). Yancher and South (2009) argued that "the combination of two instructional techniques from contradictory theories could lead to the dilution of the efficacy of both, if neither one were given the emphasis and structure needed for it to create its intended effect" (p. 13).

Graham Gibbs from Oxford University, in the UK, gave a powerful plenary speech during the 2006 conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) in Washington DC, where he criticized the conference presentations for lack of theory

(Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007). He expressed his disappointment in that most of the sessions he had attended did not use theory. In the closing plenary, the new co-president of ISSOTL, Keith Trigwell, acknowledged Gibbs' critique and challenged the society to address it (Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007). A similar suggestion was offered by Pat Hutchings in the inaugural issue of the International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007). As Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson (2007) note, "[Hutchings] advocates generosity. Theory may come in many forms and we should be generous in our treatment of the contributions in the domain of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" (p. 5). Also, the development of theory-use over time must be supported and monitored, not considered as self-regulating.

Five Main Learning Theories

Learning theories have a rich and diverse heritage and, as such, various paradigms concerning the learning process exist today. Psychologists, were investigating the phenomenon of learning until the 1950s, with the goal to try and develop the 'great theory' that would be accountable for all learning endeavours (Gredler, 2001). They failed to build the one comprehensive learning theory – a theory that can actually explain how people come to understand things – as new social, cultural and technological developments have challenged our thoughts on optimal learning. In acknowledgment of the complexities of the learning process, it stands to reason that at present, there is no single theory that can adequately account for the variety of internal mental processes of the learner, the context in which learning occurs and the type of learning task. This study is predicated on that belief. While attempting to provide a rationale and framework for the main learning theories, I have grouped the theories within the

context of learning paradigms. Leonard (2002) defined learning paradigms as "classifications of learning theories into schools based upon their most dominant traits" (p. vii).

In this section, I present an overview of the following learning paradigms: *Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism, Humanism,* and *Critical Theory*. It should be noted, however, that the overall thesis is not about describing how these specific theories were used in developer's practice. The purpose for describing these five main categories of theories is to provide the reader with some background of the most popular and well established learning theories, and give a better understanding of some of the prompts that I used during the interviews. I have placed a learning theory in a particular paradigm based on the shared learning principles; however, as with any categorization of this sort, within each theory one can find characteristics of other paradigms. There is a greater appreciation of the fact that determining which learning theories are the "best" will depend on what kind of learning is sought, in what contexts and for what audiences. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) remind us, "to a substantial extent, the most effective strategies for learning depend on the kind of learning that is desired and toward what ends" (p. 2). Table 3.1 highlights some of the key features of the five main learning paradigms.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of five major learning paradigms. Modified from Merriam, S., & Caffarella, R. (1991, 1998). Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Paradigm	**Behaviourism**	**Cognitivism**	**Constructivism**	**Humanism**	**Critical Theory**
Learning theorist	Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, Guthrie, Hull, Tolman, Skinner	Bloom, Ausubel, Gagne, Gardner	Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Vico	Maslow, Rogers	Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Pollock, Habermas
View of the learning process	Stimulus-response mechanism	The focus is not on an outward exhibition of learning but on the internal mental processes and connections that take place during learning	Individuals actively build knowledge and skills	Develop the learner as a whole	To seek human emancipation and freedom in circumstances of domination and oppression
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Mind as a computer: information comes in, is being processed, and leads to certain outcomes	Internal construction of reality by the individual	Affective and cognitive needs	The critique of the social reality
Purpose in education	Produce behavioural outcomes predicted by a defined set of learning objectives	Leads to change in a learner's mental schemes	Construct knowledge	Become self-actualized, autonomous	Education should be a transformative process
Educator's role	Set up a controlled environment to elicit a particular outcome	Finding better methods of transmitting their mental constructs to the learners	Facilitates and negotiates meaning with learner	Facilitates development of the whole person	Progressive educator
Manifestations in adult learning	Behavioural change; Competency-based education; Skill development and training	Cognitive development	Experiential learning; Self-directed learning; Perspective transformation; Reflective practice	Self-directed learning	Active learning

Behaviourism. It is one of five major learning theory schools, and is concerned with obtaining behavioural outcomes from learners, through a defined set of observable and measurable learning objectives (Leonard, 2002). Behaviourism operates on the *stimulus-response* model, a model that focuses on observable behaviour while discounting mental activities. The stimuli are present in the external environment, and the change in the behaviour of the learner is defined as learning. This theory is based upon B.F. Skinner's initial research work in the 1930s, which showed that mice could be trained to behave consistently by controlling their lab environment (Leonard, 2002). In his paper, *Why I am not a cognitive psychologist* Skinner (1977) argued that "the variables of which human behavior is a function lie in the environment" (p. 1), and further added that "cognitive constructs give … a misleading account of what is inside a human being" (p. 10). According to behaviourists the learner starts off as *tabula rasa* and the learning process is manifested in behavioural change.

Two types of claims underpin behaviourism. First, the stimuli that shape behaviour are found in the external environment and not in the mind. "The objection to inner states is not that they do not exist, but that they are not relevant in a functional analysis" (Skinner, 1953, p. 35). Second, the principle of positive and negative reinforcement is crucial in the learning process. In terms of learning, the following principles characterize behaviourism (Hartley, 1998 as cited in Smith, 1999):

- *Repetition, generalization, and discrimination are necessary.* Important skills can be acquired only through frequent and varied practice.
- *Reinforcement is the driving force.* Rewards and successes are preferable over punishments and failures.
- *Objectives must be clear for learning to occur.* Behavioural objectives are used to frame activities.

Cognitivism. During the late 1950s and early1960s, discontent with behaviourism led to the development of another school of thought, cognitivism. The "cognitive revolution" was initiated by Noam Chomsky's 1959 critique of behaviorism and the idea that learners start off as *tabula rasa* while ignoring the concept that thinking plays a role. Bloom, Ausubel, Gadge and Gardner are some of the theorists who have contributed to developing the cognitive theory. Cognitivism rests on the belief that the human mind processes learning inputs and outputs, the same way a computer processes information (Leonard, 2002). After the information comes in from the external environment, it is transformed, integrated and stored into symbolic mental processes. The focus of cognitivism is the accurate transmission of knowledge from the expert to the student; learning has occurred when the student has the same mental constructs as those of the teacher (Leonard, 2002). Wilson and Myers (2000) illustrate how learners have their knowledge built by someone else:

> Instructional designers could now think of learning in terms of taking experts' cognitive structures and mapping that knowledge into the heads of learners. The degree of similarity in cognitive structure between expert and novice was a good measure of whether learning objectives were being met. (p. 63)

Constructivism. The roots of constructivism go back to philosophers, such as Socrates, who argued that knowledge is created by the learner rather than transmitted from the expert to the novice. John Dewey (1859-1952), in the early 20th century, proposed that students' prior ideas and beliefs are important and should not be dismissed when building learning activities. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) also recognized the place of the learner in education, and demonstrated that assimilation and accommodation – as ways of processing information and building new knowledge – are important in explaining learning situations. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), another proponent of constructivism, believed that learning is a social activity and that meanings and

understandings derive from collaboration. Constructivism is a paradigm that views learning as an active, building process. Learners are not *tabula rasa*; rather they bring prior knowledge and experience to the learning process. Learners remain active throughout the process of learning by creating their own experiences, judging inconsistencies, generating meaning, and modifying their knowledge accordingly. If what learners encounter does not fit their current understandings, their conceptions are modified to accommodate the new experiences. With constructivism the educator becomes a coach that facilitates the learning of students and creates opportunities for them to construct and solve complex problems. Hoover (1996) describes four key implications of constructivism on teaching and learning. They are:

- *Learning is an active rather than a passive process*. Throughout the learning process, individuals should be encouraged to become active, self-directed learners.
- *Educators act as guides*. The role of the educator is to provide and engage learners in authentic and meaningful activities. According to Hoover (1996) educators rather than being the "sage on the stage", act as "guides on the side."
- *Sufficient time is needed in this process.* Since the knowledge is actively built, learners must be provided with ample time to reflect about new experiences and how they fit with their prior understandings and preconceptions.
- *Learning is both an individual and social process.* Interacting in small groups and collaborating helps individuals to make sense of their world and integrate new information. As McDermott (1993) puts it:

> Learning is in the conditions that bring people together and organize a point of contact that allows for particular pieces of information to take on a relevance…learning does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part. (p. 292)

Humanism. Humanism's central tenet is the growth of the individual as a mature human being, able to make positive decisions for himself or herself and for the society. Humanists argue that study of the self, motivation, and feelings must be taken into account; they are concerned if individual needs are met through holistic learning. Humanism rests on the belief that it is important to study individuals as a whole and help them achieve personal freedom and dignity. Educators are seen as facilitators who guide students through learning experiences to help them become self-directed, and ultimately self-learned (Leonard, 2002). The stimulus to learn is not found externally, but must come from within the learner. Key theorists of humanism include Abraham Maslow and Karl Rogers. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of motivation puts physiological needs at the lowest level and self-actualization at the highest. Only when individuals meet their lower-level needs can they move up to the next level. Rogers (1983) emphasized that learning must combine both affective and cognitive needs in order to develop self-actualized, autonomous individuals; "When we learn in that way, we are *whole*, utilizing all our masculine and feminine capacities" (p. 20, italics in original). According to Rogers, learning from a humanistic orientation means that learning is self-initiated and evaluated by the learner (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Proponents of humanism believe that "there is a natural tendency for people to learn and that learning will flourish if nourishing, encouraging environments are provided" (Cross, 1981, p. 228).

Critical Theory. The term critical theory can be employed quite loosely; however, in this context it refers to lines of thought derived from "The Frankfurt School," (Kellner, 1989), an unofficial term for those associated with the Institute for Social Research, founded in Frankfurt in 1923[2]. Some of the most important members of the institute were Max Horkheimer (1895-1973),

[2] Macey, The penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory, s.v. "Frankfurt School."

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), as well as Adorno and Horkheimer's student, Jurgen Habermas (1929-). In brief, critical theory sets itself apart from other theories in that it provides a critique of contemporary society and it is particularly sceptical of knowledge systems. According to the previously mentioned theorists, a theory is critical in so far as it seeks human emancipation, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer 1982, p. 244). Ultimately, the goal is to empower individuals so that they are able to "not just to determine what was *wrong* with contemporary society at present, but, by identifying progressive aspects and tendencies within it, to help transform society for the better" (Finlayson, 2005, p. 4). The central theme in critical theory is to examine our values and beliefs that appear to be neutral, and subject them to critique so that they can be modified or abandoned, even.

In the field of education, critical theory concerns itself with shaping the learner's beliefs, preconceptions, and actions so that they can engage in self-reflection and emancipation. Stephen Brookfield (2005) defines critical theory as critical thinking that can "identify, and then to challenge and change the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (p. viii). According to Brookfield (2005) a critical society needs to focus on challenging ideology, contesting hegemony, unmasking power, overcoming alienation, pursuing liberation, reclaiming reason, and practicing democracy (p. 43). Educators must empower learners and have them critically reflect on taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours. Meanwhile, learners should see education as a powerful force for helping them reject any forms of oppression and inequality.

Summary

My purpose in chapters two and three was to set the stage broadly for the chapters that follow by calling readers' attention to the relevant literature, and to provide a context for

understanding how the field has evolved over the last 50 years and how it continues to evolve and situate itself in the higher education landscape. In order to provide a broad foundation for the topics covered in depth in the subsequent chapters, my goal thus far has been to provide a basis for understanding and appreciating the history of educational development. The purpose of chapter three was to provide a synthesis of the literature related to theories, including definitions, describe main theories of learning, and relate theories to the context of educational developers. What is missing and what this study specifically aims to address is how learning theories impact educational developers' practice. What are their conceptions of learning theories? How do learning theories inform these practitioner's work? What other factors impact their practice? The following chapter details the study design, and the methods I use to address the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As educational development has become an established field that is moving from the periphery to the centre of postsecondary institutions and higher education overall, little is understood about the practitioners themselves. What does their disciplinary knowledge entail and, in particular, how do learning theories fit into that? By addressing those questions, this research aims to shed some light and bridge the gap in knowledge and understanding of developers' practice. The study hopes to contribute to the debate about educational development "being a legitimate academic discipline in its own right" (Bath and Smith, 2004, p. 9). This debate will continue for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is essential that developers articulate the learning theories they subscribe to and reflect on their efficacy (Bath & Smith, 2004). This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study, including the study purpose, its methodological frameworks, the research design and procedures, and the analysis process.

Purpose

As previously mentioned, this research was undertaken with the purpose of further understanding the practice of educational developers by examining their views on learning theories and, in particular, how learning theories inform their work. The overall question guiding this research was: *How do learning theories fit in the educational developer's practice?* The following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What are the developer's conceptions of learning theories?
2. How do learning theories shape developer's work?

3. What factors influence educational developer's use of learning theories?

Methodological Framework

This research used a combination of interpretivist and naturalistic paradigms. Interpretivists believe that reality is socially constructed by developing meanings and understandings. Indeed, in this study, I was interested in developer's conceptions and interpretations of learning theories, and their tendency to use them – always being mindful that I cannot separate myself from what I already know. Based on my prior experience working with educational developers and based on the preliminary interviews, I felt that developers have different understandings and tendencies to use learning theories. This gives the research a rationalistic character (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) in that I began with a specific interest and, to a certain extent, particular notions of what I might find. As described below, data were analyzed using constant comparative methods based on constructivist grounded theory, giving this research some naturalistic character (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) as well, by allowing unanticipated findings to emerge. In this process, it becomes important to "preserve flexibility [and] follow a path of discovery" (Punch, 1998, p. 42).

Interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist approach provides the most appropriate and fruitful method of exploring learning theories and their impact on the practice of educational developers. Such an approach is optimal for investigating a complex topic because it has an unfolding nature, is expansive in scope, and subtle in its application (Patton, 1990). The interpretivist approach is concerned with revealing meaning behind empirical observations, and can use a wide range of data gathering strategies. Keedy (1992) suggests that the interpretivist paradigm "enables the researcher to visualize how events or phenomena are perceived differently from multiple perspectives and from across similar events" (p. 162).

Naturalistic paradigm. A fundamental aim of the present study is to reveal educational developer's claims about learning theories and to illuminate meanings and interpretations. There are multiple realities that exist in the minds of people; "they are therefore intangible and can be studied only in a wholistic and idiosyncratic fashion" (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 82). Hence, the naturalistic paradigm is well suited for this research as it will give a more holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Since the study is informed by the naturalistic paradigm, the researcher is primarily a 'data-gathering instrument' as opposed to the unquestioned expert. Also, the interaction between the researcher and the participant is inevitable and should be further exploited for the sake of the investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). If the interaction "could be eliminated by some methodological tour de force, the tradeoff would not be worthwhile, as it is precisely this interactivity" (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 82) that gives greater insightfulness and helps in the development of trust.

Constructivist grounded theory approach. Traditional grounded theory is described by its founders, Glaser and Strauss (1967), as an inductive methodology adopted by some neutral observer to study an external reality worth discovering**.** By contrast, Charmaz (2000) "assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 510) in her explanation of constructivist grounded theory. She considers the following characteristics of grounded theory: simultaneous collection and analysis of data; data coding processes; constant comparison; memo writing; sampling to enhance the researcher's emerging ideas; theoretical saturation; and theoretical integration. In this study, I have used carefully constructed questions aimed at forming "a revised, more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510).

Methods

Multiple methods were best suited for this research, as they allowed me to best frame, address and examine the research questions from different angles, and to provide tentative answers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue "the multiple methodologies of qualitative research may be viewed as bricolage and the researcher as bricoleur" (p. 2). Several sources of data (existing research, documents, in-depth interviews, and inventory) were utilized in this dissertation and the use of multiple perspectives and frameworks was considered as well, to allow for triangulation and enhancement of the results.

Data sources. To address the study's main research question, I selected three ways to collect data: (a) interviews (initial and follow-up), (b) documents associated with educational developer's work, and (c) Pratt and Collins' (2001) Teaching Perspectives Inventory. I concluded that semi-structured one-on-one (face-to-face) interviews would be the best and primary source of data to explore the topic at hand. Semi-structured in-depth interviews have a flexible and fluid structure, allowing rich data to be obtained from the participants' experiences and meanings that they hold for everyday phenomena.

Supplementing the interviews, I asked each participant to share 2-3 documents. Documents here include what LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) define as, "symbolic materials such as writing and signs and nonsymbolic materials such as tools and furnishings" (p. 216). I see this approach as powerful because materials "in the broad sense of any communication" (Holsti, 1969, p.1) – for example, personal letters, public records, physical traces, newspapers, cultural artifacts, and the like – already exist in the research setting. These types of materials do not intrude upon or alter the investigation, as might the presence of the researcher; they are often accessed easily and contain worthy insights to the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2002). From my experience working at a teaching and learning centre, I

noticed that such centres have plenty of materials readily available on workshop development, training practices, and other documents reflecting the activities of the centre. Therefore, prior to the interviews I asked the participants to select 2-3 artifacts based on the following criteria: i) participants should have played a key role in developing the artifacts; ii) the artifacts should be meaningful to the participants; iii) the artifacts should be representative of a range of activities in which developers are involved. These documents were used as points of discussion in both interviews and were helpful in getting developers to talk and unpack their claims about learning theories. I also analysed the documents to get a better sense of how developers use learning theories in their practice.

In addition, I asked the participants to complete Pratt and Collins' (2001) Teaching Perspective Inventory (TPI) on their own (http://teachingperspectives.com/) prior to the follow-up interviews. I send them, via e-mail, the link to the TPI – which is accessible cost-free on the World Wide Web – and provided some guidance, noting that this is a short questionnaire aimed at helping one collect and summarize thoughts and ideas about teaching. A strength of this inventory is that it is based on an empirical study of adult educators' perspectives of teaching and learning in diverse settings. Perspectives (philosophical orientations) can be defined as a person's outlook or lens through which he or she views the world (Pratt & Associates, 1998). Pratt avoids making value judgments of one approach being superior to another; his emphasis, instead, is on understanding: the learner, the teacher, the content, the context of the educational system and the relationships among them. He takes the work of theorists like Menges and Rando (1989) and Fox (1983) a step further by looking at the underlying beliefs, intentions, and actions of educators. One's perspective on teaching is explained by Pratt & Associates (1998) as a fundamental indicator of commitment since it provides "the bulk of the iceberg" (p. 16) while the teaching methods only the tip of the iceberg. The authors state that we rarely are aware of our perspectives

and they often remain invisible as “they are usually something we look through, rather than look at, when teaching” (Pratt & Associates, 1998, p. 33). They argue that since adult education has a variety of purposes and goals, there should be a plurality of perspectives on teaching adults. Pratt introduced his five perspectives in 1992 to include transmitting content, modeling ways of being, understanding the learner, building learners' self-esteem, and seeking to change society. The inventory yields five perspectives on teaching by asking structured questions about participant’s actions in the teaching setting, their intentions for organizing learning situations, and their beliefs about fundamental principles of teaching and learning (Pratt & Associates, 1998). The disadvantage of this inventory as with any other inventory is that it is built on some assumptions regarding teaching and learning. Each perspective is rooted in a particular theory of learning and reflects a particular view of knowledge, thus limiting the inventory questions to five learning theories. The inventory is structured, making the five categories insufficient to account for the variety of mental processes of the learner, the context where learning takes place, and the technological innovations and their effect on teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the TPI has a high validity and reliability.

The purpose of using these five perspectives of teaching – transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing and social reform – was to help educational developers unpack and reflect on the learning theories that shape their work. It was used in this study merely as a reflective tool, providing developers with a means of looking more deeply at the underlying values and assumptions that constitute their philosophical orientations to their practice. Participants were asked to share with me their TPI scores and I printed off their profile sheet to use in the follow-up interviews. The purpose of the inventory was not to be used as a diagnostic tool; rather, it served as a catalyst and framework for reflection and discussion. Finally, I

prepared field notes following the initial interviews to record observations, and questions to ask in the follow-up interviews.

Study setting and sample selection. The study is situated in the Canadian university setting with the participant pool limited to developers working in campus-wide teaching and learning centres in Ontario. I decided to focus on the university, rather than community colleges, since my own educational and professional history is associated with the university setting. Hence, I was driven by the desire to understand this context more deeply by further exploring and investigating this group of individuals. I selected centres in Ontario since: i) there are more educational developers in Ontario and the roots of developers go back at least 40 years; and ii) having all educational developers from the same geographical area makes these participants' experiences 'more similar'. Only centres with a broad mandate were chosen – excluding discipline-specific centres and those whose main focus was technical support, work on special projects, or distance education.

The present study adopted purposive sampling, in which "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). The goal was to obtain a broad purposive sample that included educational developers of varied ages, geographic location, and years of experience. To select participants for this study I used the Heads of Educational Development Group definition of an educational developer (as mentioned in chapter one) and included anyone who, at the time of their interview, was formally connected with a centre.

Recruitment of participants. The following three sources were used to recruit potential participants: (1) the online membership guide available from the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (http://www.stlhe.ca/members/member-registration/), (2) teaching and learning centre websites in Canadian universities available from the Association of

Universities and Colleges of Canada's (AUCC) website, (http://www.aucc.ca/can_uni/our_universities/index_e.html), and (3) recommendations from the interview participants themselves. The STLHE is a national organization committed to enhancing and advancing teaching and learning in higher education. Through its membership registration form individuals are asked to select their occupation including that of an educational developer. The AUCC organizational website offers links to the centres through which potential participants – including their contact information – working in a teaching and learning centre were identified. Moreover, I conducted preliminary interviews with three educational developers (not included in the sample) in the summer of 2009. Through these informal conversations, other key informants were added to the list as recommended by them. The original list was distilled down to 15 candidates; from those contacted, only 11 agreed to participate.

Study participants were invited to the study through a formal letter – printed on institutional letterhead from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto – requesting their participation in the study. Together with the invitation letter, a consent form also was e-mailed. Appendix A contains a copy of the invitation letter and Appendix B a copy of the information letter and consent form. Those individuals who confirmed their participation by contacting me via e-mail were asked to return a signed copy of the consent form. In subsequent communications, we agreed upon a meeting date, time, and location for the initial interviews. Prior to the interviews I gave participants a copy of their signed consent form. Initial and follow-up interviews took place face-to-face over an eight month period. In our communications, participants were also reminded to forward 2-3 documents, as requested in the informed consent document (together with the criteria on documents' selection). At the end of the initial interviews, a mutually agreed upon date and time was arranged for the next round of interviews. Prior to the

follow-up interviews, participants were kindly asked to complete the TPI, as mentioned in the informed consent form.

Interview design and process. Interviews were used as the primary source of gathering data as they provided an opportunity to obtain rich, deep and descriptive data from the participant's experiences, perceptions and the meanings that they hold for the issue under investigation. The initial semi-structured in-depth interviews (Johnson, 2002; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rapley, 2001) were approximately 90 minutes in length, while the follow-up interviews ranged in length from 30 to 60 minutes. Participants were told in advance, in the invitation letter, that the purpose of the study was to explore their views on learning theories. Even though the interviews consisted of specific topic areas that needed to be covered during the course of the interviews, the order of the questions and the exact wording of the questions were left to the discretion of the interviewee. The fluid structure of this method of interviewing allowed me to respond immediately to concerns raised by participants, to ask probing questions, and to discuss with the participants issues considered to be important to them. Appendix C contains the interview guiding questions with some probes.

I brought to the initial interviews a copy of the documents that developers had forwarded to me prior to this meeting. I started the initial interviews by thanking the developer for agreeing to participate, and restating the importance of their responses to the success of this research. I also provided a brief overview of the study and explained the significance of my research to the educational development field. Next, I asked if they had any questions or concerns about the consent form or the interview process.

As the purpose of this study was to explore how learning theories fit into developer's work, during both interviews educational developers were asked in different ways about their use of learning theories and they were continually encouraged to provide a rationale for their claims.

Similar to the TPI which was used as prompt, educational developers were also shown a spectrum and asked where they would position themselves. On one end would be those people who find learning theories irrelevant to their practice, the other end would be developers who have their learning theories systematized and clearly defined, and the middle those whose learning theories are implicit. The first category was created based on the educational development literature and its emphasis that in this field the practical has been valued over the theoretical (Webb, 1996a). "In effect, educational developers have been employed mainly as practical helpers to university teachers who, despite their own theoretical concerns within their own subject-areas, have shown themselves to be traditionally reluctant to become theoretically interested in the teaching-learning process itself" (Badley, 2001, p. 169). The implicit/deliberative conceptions of learning are well established and widespread in the literature as to be almost paradigmatic. The continuum derived mainly from the work of Rando and Menges (1991) on implicit theories, the research of Marilla Svinicki (1991) where she categorizes theories as implicit and formal, and Reber's studies on implicit learning in the 1960s, which came against a background in which research on explicit, deliberative learning was dominant.

I prepared field notes following the initial interviews to record observations and insights on the way participants responded to the interview questions. The field notes also helped me develop new questions to include in the follow-up interviews. The initial interviews were transcribed before initiating the cycle of the follow-up interviews. A similar procedure was followed in the successive interviews where I also brought a copy of each developer's Teaching Perspectives Inventory. Throughout both interviews, I found participants to be genuinely interested in the research topic and the results of my study. As promised, I will send the interviewees a brief summary of the results of my study upon completion.

Interview guide. The interview guide proved essential in not only identifying a list of questions, topics, and areas that I wanted to cover during the interviews, but also in ensuring some consistency from one participant to the next. It provided some structure to the interview process while still asking open-ended questions to allow other topics to emerge during the conversations. Three preliminary interviews were conducted with three educational developers, to identify potential key informants, to explore pressing issues in the field, and ultimately to prepare me for the interview phase of the study.

In the initial interviews, aside from some questions aimed at better understanding the developer's background and role, four areas of interest with several prompts were developed. They included: (1) educational developer's views on teaching and learning; (2) developer's conceptions and understanding of learning theories; (3) how learning theories inform their practices (including a discussion on the artifacts) and why; and (4) other factors informing their practice. The first 30 minutes of the initial interview was to find out more about the interviewees, their background, pathway to the profession, role in the centre and their views on teaching and learning. The rest of the interview questions were crafted to address the research questions by exploring developer's conceptions of learning theories, understanding their knowledge towards learning theories, and determining their use of learning theories. The follow-up interviews were designed to discuss: (1) the TPI; (2) factors in general that impact developers' work; and (3) learning theories and factors for their use of learning theories. The questions for the follow-up interview were modified in accordance with some of the issues and questions that were raised and identified in the initial interviews. Together, both interview questions were designed to ultimately gauge these practitioner's understanding and usage of learning theories. Several probes were used in both interviews: participants were asked about five main learning theories, learning theories behind their artifacts, TPI results, and where they position themselves in a learning

theories spectrum. These tools helped reveal their thoughts on learning theories and investigate, from their perspective, how theories fit in their work. Given the limited sample size, in a few cases, participant's data were omitted to maintain their anonymity. As I was conducting the interviews, I was also analyzing them and this process proved to be extremely useful in crafting the follow-up interviews.

Analysis

For the analysis of my data, I intended to follow systematic procedures as outlined in the constructivist grounded theory method (Charmaz, 1990, 1991, 1995c, 2000, 2006), although I must admit that the process was quite convoluted as I revealed meaning from the participants' perspectives and experiences. In order to extract information from the data set and transform it into meaningful findings, I had to actively engage in demanding processes throughout all stages of data analysis. The constructivist grounded theory approach, like its grounded theory counterpart, uses an iterative pathway moving from data collection to emergent theory and back again until theoretical saturation is reached. I tried different ways of working with the data from creating tables with participant's information to developing narratives in the form of portraits, noting the participant's backgrounds, conceptions, and factors influential to their use of theories.

The process of analyzing the data started with the transcription of the interviews from the audio recorder; this was done concurrently with the data collection. In the process of converting the audio interview in a written transcript, I captured vocalizations other than speech (e.g., laughing, coughing, mumbling) and gestures (e.g., pointing and smiling) as well, with the purpose of including as much detail as possible to present not only content but meanings and emotions too. After further listening to the audio recordings, I made several corrections to the transcripts and began the data reduction process where I sought to simplify and organize the data into more easily manageable components. The process of simplifying and "bringing order,

structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 130) involved the use of the following three coding methods as described by Charmaz (2006): open coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding with the understanding that a researcher may alternate between all three forms of analysis depending upon the changing circumstances of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Line-by-line open coding helped me start the chain of theory development whereby actions and events were interpreted into open codes. These initial open codes served to break open the data into categories, and helped me stay grounded in the data (Charmaz, 1995c). After I had established some strong analytic directions through my initial line-by-line coding, I began the process of identifying emergent codes from the data set and then testing those codes across the transcripts. What followed next was focused coding to synthesize and explain larger segments of data. "Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 37). Once I became more clear and confident in my working codes, I clustered similar coded units together into concepts. Then the concepts were analyzed and those relating to a common theme were collected together to give a higher commonality, called categories. These categories helped refine the concepts many times, in order to have a manageable number to work with. They also served as an intermediate step and provided a strong basis for the next level of coding. Focused coding led to a change or development in the initial categories that emerged from the data. For example, the category *exposure to learning theories* was combined with the category *opportunity to apply learning theories* and changed to be *educational background*.

The final stage of coding, known as theoretical coding, is a sophisticated level of coding employed to develop a hypothesis leading to a theory by exploring relationships amongst categories. As Glaser (1978) mentioned in Charmaz' (2006) book theoretical coding is a

conceptualization of "how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory" (p. 72). In short, theoretical codes specify possible relationships between categories that were developed during focused coding. For example, theoretical coding led to the hypothesis that *there is a relationship between educational background and tendency to use learning theories*.

After identifying categories, I used them as headings to organize the data. Under each category I included, quotations, summarized notes, and my personal comments listed by each participant's pseudonym. Participants were quoted directly to maintain accuracy and richness of content; except, in some cases, quotations were not included or slightly modified to avoid revealing a participant's identity. This process helped me compare segments of data first, to each other, and then to the identified categories to look for fit and whether the data were confirming or disconfirming the existing categories (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed throughout the analysis from initial open coding until relationships were sought at the stage of theoretical development.

Summary

This chapter described the research methodology and the associated research design. The research methodology chosen was a combination of interpretivist and naturalistic paradigms. As much as I began with particular interests and ideas of what I might find; there was room for unanticipated findings to emerge. I used a variety of data gathering strategies to increase the validity of research findings. For the analysis of my data, I followed systematic procedures as outlined in the constructivist grounded theory method. The analysis process I undertook consisted of an iterative pathway moving from data collection to emergent theory and back again until theoretical saturation was reached, and I was able to make sense of the data and draw conclusions

from my research findings. In the following chapter, I begin the process of reporting and discussing study findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: A PORTRAT OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPERS

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide descriptions of educational developers – in terms of their varied disciplinary backgrounds and their different pathways to the profession. While my intent was to explore developers' views on learning theories and, in particular, how learning theories inform their work, I believe including this information provides an understanding of underlying reasons for developers' conceptions and use of learning theories. It offers a comprehensive view of educational developers' practice and provides insights for future research. Presenting a portrait of the participants in my study is important since, in the absence of a formal career structure educational developers represent a unique group of professionals. I spent the first part of the initial interview finding out some of the developer's 'characteristics.' I have presented the information obtained from the initial questions by offering demographic information on educational developers including their disciplinary backgrounds, degrees, years in the profession and number of units in which they have worked. I also include information on how they came to work in this field and the pathways they followed to the profession.

Demographic Information

Eleven practitioners were interviewed in 9 educational development centres in Ontario. The sample comprised of 9 females and 2 males and they ranged in experience as educational developers from one year to 13 years. Even though their disciplinary backgrounds varied, their main goals were the same: to change the culture on teaching and make teaching relevant, to educate people, guide faculty and get them excited about teaching. Although most individuals in my sample were appointed educational developers, they had slightly different foci (i.e.,

educational development, curriculum development, support teaching assistants, director, and research analyst). Participants came from a range of disciplines – arts, social sciences, humanities, sciences – with 6 of the 11 having completed a doctorate by the time of their interview and one was in the last stage of completion (labelled on the table below as PhD). Meanwhile, three participants had already withdrawn from their doctoral studies. Developers varied across the group in terms of career mobility, with 5 of them having worked at two centres or more. All but two of the participants interviewed, were already embedded in a university context when they started their careers as educational developers. Based upon the categorization used by Sorcinelli and her colleagues (2006), four of the participants were relatively new to the field, with five or fewer years of relevant experience; the rest were classified as experienced developers. From the above information, I constructed a Participant Profile Summary, presented in Table 5.1, to aid the reader in better understanding the backgrounds of the study participants. It also serves to make the reader familiar to the pseudonyms that I assigned to this group of developers – considering my ethical duty as a researcher – to maintain respondent confidentiality and anonymity.

Table 5.1: Participant Profile Summary

Pseudonym	**Years in Field**	**Sex M/F**	**Degree Status**	**Units Worked**
Julia	≥10	F	PhD	2
Philip	≥10	M	MA	2
Michelle	≤5	F	MA	1

Debbie	≥10	F	PhD	1
Naomi	≤5	F	PhD	1
Samantha	≥10	F	PhD	2
Manuel	≥10	M	MA	4
Anne	≥10	F	MA	2
Patricia	6-10	F	PhD	1
Lauren	≤5	F	PhD	1
Claire	≤5	F	PhD	1

Pathway to the Profession

Even though each of the developers had a unique pathway to educational development, three common themes emerged from the interviews: commitment to teaching, appeal to the university environment, and serendipity. Similar themes were reported by Gosling, McDonald and Stockley (2007), where the authors noted that factors such as an early interest in teaching and various chance events or 'serendipitous' moments had a significant influence in educational developer's career. More recently, McDonald (2011) explored in her doctoral research educational developers' trajectories into the field of educational development. I included information on developers' pathways to provide a more complete portrait of the group of people that participated in this study.

Commitment to teaching. Many developers were interested in teaching even before they made the commitment to enter educational development. As one of them noted, "When I was

doing my Master's, I actually did a study on problem-based learning for one of the faculties…and that was just a separate independent study that I was really interested in." (Claire) The same person noted that, when she was pursuing her PhD, "again had a lot of interest in education and it resulted in another independent study – how leadership development could be integrated in the academics – this is all in addition to the research that [I] was doing." (Claire) One person had the opportunity to teach an entire course during her Master's and found that experience "very exciting and illuminating." (Michelle) For Manuel, being rewarded for his teaching, prompted him to initiate activities that would be known as educational development. He further noted,

> I got really involved in the teaching side of things and I found that the rewards of the TA [Teaching Assistant]ships were much more palpable than the rewards of solitary research in the humanities… I got nominated for an award for teaching and learning. I am getting rewarded all over the place. People are giving me external praise for my teaching, my students, my peers, my supervisors, so that was nice, and I found that I was almost a natural at it and I could help others as well with it. So I started up with a couple of other people a peer development network in my own department.

Meanwhile Lauren's commitment to teaching was not only due to the immediate rewards but also because her research wasn't going in the direction that she wanted it to go,

> My supervisor went in one direction, and I had planned on going in another direction. So I got a chance to work as a sessional instructor and I absolutely loved it and learned that I taught differently than a lot of other people, other academics. And I was very effective at teaching and was using a lot of …active learning techniques, really focused on helping the students become excited about science and learn some critical thinking skills more than memorizing a bunch of data.

Almost everyone in my sample noted that their role as a teaching assistant was crucial in building further interest in teaching and learning. Most of them initially had negative experiences as they were "being thrown into TAing and just did everything wrong." (Julia) Julia further noted, "[educational development] was such a relief to me because I didn't actually want to teach but I had to. So if I had to do it I wanted to at least do it well, and then I discovered through the courses that I actually love it." Philip described his TAing experience as a "horrible failure" feeling that "this isn't right." He was simply told that he was a teaching assistant and "had a tutorial that [he] had to run twice per week and that was it,"

> So I started learning more about teaching, I did my own study and I started going to workshops, took some courses and all these different things at the centre that [my university] was offering and within a year I started running workshops at the TA day and so forth. (Philip)

Another participant responded similarly – connecting it to her teaching assistant experience – when asked about her path to the profession. She described her experience as being "thrown into" her classroom without any preparation or TA training and noted that it didn't go well,

> I am trying to remember the first time that I taught in a university setting…when I was an MA student and I tried the heavy-handed dogmatic approach where I am the one who has all the answers and you don't. So you are going to sit there and pay attention, be quiet and I am going to enlighten you. And that went over like a lead balloon; I didn't get very far and the students didn't respond to me. (Michelle)

Similarly, for Patricia, having to teach without any formal training on how to do so sparked an interest in student learning and teaching. She further noted,

> They offered me to take on a couple of sessions on a course on learning development in adolescence which was something I knew next to nothing about…They opened the instructional development centre and I am not sure if it was in my first or second year. I had no idea what instructional development was, what kind of things they did and thought oh maybe I will get some content so that maybe I can use it with my students. (Patricia)

Appeal of the university environment. Some of the participants in my study expressed an interest in working for the university long before they knew that educational development would be their destination. One of them stated that she was interested in "working closely with faculty and with an academic mission just not in an academic position. So that was sort of my direction but I came into higher education not knowing exactly where I was going to be in the university, where I want to or I would find a place to do that." (Naomi) Similarly, another educational developer knew that she liked to work for the university and would probably "gravitate towards that environment." She noted,

> I hated working in a small you know in an office that employed less than 10 people and I like to work in the university environment so, and I wanted something to do with education. This job sort of let me do all of those things… I mean I am in a truly privileged place in terms of you know I work in a university environment, there is opportunities, I'm skilled and knowledgeable, and have a good network of colleagues and friends. (Samantha)

One of the developers not only had a strong desire to work for the university but also a strong commitment about the role of university as separate and distinct from other institutions in society. As he further explains,

> I just feel really strongly about higher education in the world and universities' role in society. So that's another factor that affects why I want to do this work in universities rather than in corporations. I don't want to work somewhere like I know I can make a lot of money as a trainer but I don't want to work somewhere where the only thing is to make happier employees or more productive employees. That's not my job; my job is to foster university collegiality and university expertise in a way that is different from an assembly line productivity or training of good workers or whatever. That means the students getting degrees or the faculty members doing their work and so that universities' place includes basic, inquiry and critique of society, really strong critique of society and where that intersects with pedagogy, that's where I see myself. (Manuel)

Serendipity. Virtually all the participants in my sample were influenced by various chance events or serendipitous opportunities that presented themselves. For most of them, it was being offered a position and them accepting it even if they knew little about the field at that time. As one of them noted,

> I said I needed a job, [my advisor] knew I needed a job and he says well they need somebody to just you know do whatever is coming up if they need someone [at the centre] to do research, do that, if they need someone to make photocopies, do that. And I said 'Ok' and that's how I got into it and learned that there is this thing called educational development, and got to know the people, and got a sense of what was involved…not knowing at the time that I would stay in it, it was a job but then it just evolved and so that's what happened. (Samantha)

Similarly, another developer wasn't familiar with the position and it was something that she hadn't initially considered; but, it seemed appealing, noting that,

> This position came up so I applied. I actually stopped in before I applied for the job to make sure that what I read was actually reality. Educational development wasn't as well known, it wasn't as well known outside the circle of educational developers and I wanted to know whether it was actually a combination of everything that I loved: teaching, research, professional development and I even like the administration side, and I found out that this position actually was that and the faculty appointment and then I applied. (Debbie)

Another participant explains her serendipitous path to the field and explains that she "didn't even know what an educational developer was until this position was advertised really." As she was closer to finishing her dissertation, a colleague's job opened up and he said, "You might think of applying and I never thought of it before and I said sure and the rest is history." (Claire)

For some, a factor that impacted their career decision was their positive experience from attending conferences, and finding the community of developers very welcoming. Most developers started out with aspirations to enter traditional academic careers in a specific discipline and eventually committed to educational development. One of them was greatly influenced from a conference noting that,

> At one point I was splitting my time evenly between my discipline and educational development and I realized I was going to have to make a decision as to where I was going to put my energies and my focus on my career and it sort of tortured me for about a year or so. Finally I was at an Educational Developers Caucus conference and I looked around at people there and I realized that: a) they were happy, which is totally unlike my colleagues in philosophy. These people actually seem to like their jobs which really appealed to me, and then, b) the culture was different and that was one of the reasons that

> they were happy in their jobs. And one of the reasons that they could have some success without becoming embittered. It was a supportive culture educational development, a very nurturing culture and it was a culture that valued sharing. So if you create something, you distribute it for people to use it. You don't hold on to it jealously, you don't guard it that somebody might steal it, your ideas or anything like that. You don't find that attitude very often. So that appealed to me as well and it was at that conference that I decided ok I'm not going to be a philosophy professor and I started working full time in this field. (Philip)

Similarly, Michelle describes being "blown away" by an STLHE conference:

> There were all these faculty members, and administrators, students, talking about teaching, and talking about how to build their courses and connect more effectively with students. These were conversations that were important to me but I didn't realize they were important until I heard people talking about them. It was like a light bulb went on. And it was really inspiring.

Another educational developer met the director at one centre and she was the one who introduced him to many excellent teachers on campus who were interested in talking about teaching, not just research. He further noted to be,

> Pulled in against my will in a way, and I enjoyed that a lot… abandoning the idea of becoming a professor, abandoning the idea of being in my discipline, I ended up in this job doing teaching development only but I'll tell you something as I was doing this teaching development thing, eventually it seemed clear that it is going to be my career. And one of the things that made that ok was that in 2005 or 2004 maybe I went to a conference… I met other people who really also wanted to do the same kind of thing; take

their critical theories from their different disciplines so history or literature, philosophy wherever they came from, and apply that to the teaching development theories. (Manuel)

Summary

From the examples detailed above, one can appreciate what Gosling, McDonald and Stockley (2007) meant by "there is no such thing as a typical educational developer" (p. 7). Educational developers come from various disciplines and follow different pathways. I tried to identify some of these practitioner's characteristics and build a profile that captures who they are. To give a fuller picture of educational developer's practice, following this summary of the participant's education and experiences, the process of revealing meaning continues with a detailed description of developer's views and conceptions of learning theories.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCEPTIONS OF LEARNING THEORIES

Introduction

This chapter addresses the first sub-question outlined in chapters one and four; that is, *What are educational developer's conceptions of learning theories?* Specifically, this chapter describes and examines developer's understanding of learning theories and provides a context to situate and appreciate the rest of the chapters. Early in the initial interviews, I asked a general question about developer's thoughts on learning and what they would describe as the optimal conditions for adults to learn. Then, I asked a number of questions during the initial and follow-up interviews to better comprehend their understanding of learning theories. I specifically asked: "What is your conception of the idea of a learning theory?" with the intention to capture the meanings that they ascribe to learning theories. I also conducted a document analysis of the artifacts they sent to, me with the purpose of trying to identify how learning theories were defined by them.

Educational developers talked about their definition of learning theories and, while each story was unique, the following two themes were consistent across them: (i) developers define learning theories as lowercase 'lt' as opposed to uppercase 'LT'; and (ii) developers define learning theories based on their prior disciplines. By using these descriptors, I do not intend to suggest a particular prescribed order of the themes, or a discrete separation of them. I am aware that such divisions are to an extent artificial and some of the uniqueness of the participant's stories is lost in the process. These two themes, however, helped me understand and convey similarities and differences among developer's conceptions of learning theories.

Learning Theories as Lowercase 'lt' as Opposed to Uppercase 'LT'

Bridging the gap between what is considered academic, traditional theory and what is relevant and applicable in practice has been analyzed during the past few decades in fields such as education (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Fenstermacher, 1987) anthropology (Geertz, 1973), epistemology (Rorty, 1979; Toulmin, 1969; Lyotard, 1979) and ethics (Nussbaum, 2009) (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001). Many theoretical frameworks and different perspectives offer lenses by which to understand the theory-practice gap; these approaches, in particular, appreciate the distinction between uppercase or capital T theory and lowercase t. To that end, Kessels and Korthagen's (2001) relate theory with capital T versus theory with small t to the classical controversy between Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions of reality (knowledge as *episteme* vs. *phronesis).* The authors described episteme as cognitive in nature "unaffected by emotion or desires. It is the knowledge that is of major importance, the specific situation and context being only an instance for the application of knowledge" (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001, p. 21). Other sociological theories and models attribute the distinction between theory with capital T and theory with small t to the distinction between those two concepts. Bent Flyvbjerg's (2001) book *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* elaborates on the three approaches to knowledge (episteme, phronesis, and techne), linking them to social sciences. He summarizes the first two as:

> *Episteme* Scientific knowledge. Universal, invariable, context-independent. Based on general analytical rationality. The original concept is known today from the terms "epistemology" and "epistemic."
>
> *Phronesis* Ethics. Deliberation about values with reference to praxis. Pragmatic, variable, context dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality. The original concept has no analogous contemporary term. (p. 57)

The constructs episteme and phronesis relate well to theory with capital T, and theory with small t, respectively. The former "is prepositional and as such, is of a general form applicable to a variety of different situations and formulated in abstract terms," while the latter "is practical wisdom; it is knowledge of the particularities of a situation. It is knowledge of the concrete not the abstract" (Loughran, 2006). Within this framework, theory with a capital T is considered as expert knowledge of a particular problem derived from scientific understandings. Consistent with those descriptions and the work of Plato and Aristotle, "Theory with capital T is conceptual knowledge, generalized over many situations, theory with a small t is perceptual knowledge, personally relevant and closely linked to concrete contexts" (Bansal, 2007, p. 38).

Indeed, in the dynamic contexts in which people work today, theory with a small t cannot be discounted. We clearly see this with the participants in this study; as they connect their learning to their own experiences, and construct their own theories of practice. Psychological perspectives are helpful in this respect; in that theories with small t are acknowledged as starting from "situated learning" and "cognitive apprenticeship" (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). This way, knowledge is acquired, developed and used in authentic practices through activity and social interaction. Developers in my sample brought similar definitions to the idea of a learning theory, yet they were all different from the traditional, academic description of learning theories, or what would be called capital T. Most of them, lacking formal knowledge on learning theories, had created their own synthesis of theories, leaning towards phronesis or what Freudenthal (1978) calls the realistic approach – where theories with small t are created by the individuals themselves. Even though his work is in the context of mathematical education, an important starting point in the realistic approach is the assumption that people can and should themselves develop notions on the basis of practical experiences and problems (Korthagen, 2001).

This was indeed the case with the participants in my study. They didn't associate learning theories with formal academic theories (as created by researchers), aimed at understanding a situation; instead most developers used theories as a way to inform them on how to act in that situation (as created by the developers themselves). As one of them noted, "…thresholds and delays [are] probably fundamental to the what and the how, [and] to me those are more useful than a lot of what you would call capital T theories approaches." (Patricia) The point they made was precisely that learning theories are tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the situation. Not surprisingly, the theories were practical rather than abstract; they arose from dealing with specific problems, with individual people in particular contexts.

Most developers associated learning theories with the paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered education. They conceptualized learning theories as ideas, models, beliefs, approaches, or frameworks that would ultimately help them engage the learner in the learning process – a claim supported by statements such as,

> So when I think of learning theories, I think of terms such as experiential learning, transformative learning but I'm not sure I use the term learning theories correctly all the time… Active learning and student engagement, I'm not sure if I would describe them as concepts or theories and I talked about the notion of theories and I don't want to get lost in that. I think it's all about putting the responsibility for the learning and taking a learner-centered approach to teaching in higher education right that it's never about transmit[ting] knowledge. I think that's what I grab on to in terms of learning theories and perhaps it's my own miseducation so to speak. (Claire)

Similarly another developer stated,

> I have kind of formed my own synthesis of learning. There is the one that we use in ISW [Instructional Skills Workshop] and the one that comes from a paper in sciences and the

> idea of not doing a straight lecture for 50 minutes but the whole idea of you do a lecture for a few minutes you check in if they got it, move on to the next concept, chunk it into their 50 min session. (Lauren)

Also, several participants, when asked about their idea of a learning theory, mentioned the learning literature that they draw on and widely refer to as evidence of best practices. They used learning theories and literature interchangeably – a statement supported by claims such as, "I have a literature in the background. It has become all mashed in my mind to tell you the truth. It's far less clear than I would like it to be." The same individual noted, "Kolb has a theory, he also has a model, that's the model the three diagrams and that's one I find a useful model because I think it helps people think through how to design learning experiences." (Julia) For Michelle learning theories meant a series of steps that she had to go through to achieve a certain outcome,

> I guess learning theories would involve how people find information, how people take in information and how they report it back out. So if I'm learning something what is my motivation for learning that topic, how do I go about finding out information on that topic, how do I process information and what do I produce as a result.

One of them equated learning theories with learning styles noting that, "a lot of these learning theories are the learning styles. I don't really agree with a lot of that you are visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic." (Lauren)

As opposed to learning theories with capital L capital T, formal academic theories that are generalized over many situations, developers think of theories with small l small t – practical knowledge that is relevant, meaningful and linked to concrete contexts. A statement supported by claims such as,

> I guess I have always translated these into my own words…I don't use the word nurturing in my teaching philosophy statement. I use words that help me explain those principles

> and practices and put those in my own words so that it becomes my living document not somebody else's living document so that I'm able to live this philosophy. (Claire)

When asked about their understanding of learning theories, as opposed to answering the question, most developers related to the papers and authors that best resonated with them and emphasized the learner creating meaning, drawing from prior experiences, constructing learning, and incorporating active learning. The majority of developers believe that many of the theories, "capital T are so abstract and they don't necessarily give you the connection and ultimately it is very hard to differentiate in terms of those processes which one would make more sense." (Patricia)

Learning Theories Defined Based on Developer's Prior Disciplines

> I believe that [the] educational process has two sides – one psychological and one sociological…Profound differences in theory are never gratuitous or invented. They grow out of conflicting elements in a genuine problem. (Dewey, in Dworkin, 1959, pp. 20, 91)

With his quote, Dewey acknowledges the different notions of learning theory present in the learning literature. The problematic nature of learning theories can (and should) be highlighted so that practitioners pay careful attention to their taken-for-granted assumptions, in order to better address the dilemmas faced in their work. On a similar note, Harland and Staniforth (2003) acknowledged that developers "have very different ideas about what "counts" as a theory, [and] what constitutes "legitimate" knowledge…" (p. 29). More specific points as to what this thing called learning theory really is varies; however, depending on the developer's prior disciplines. Also, Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson (2007) argued that,

> Different academic disciplines offer, in themselves, varying perspectives and theories… since the level of theory in the conversations about teaching and learning is a variable

> dependent on the conditions within the local cultural context, it will change over time as the quality of the conversations within the context evolves. (p. 5)

Based on participant's comments throughout both interviews in this study, it was obvious that most developers defined and conceptualized learning theories according to their prior disciplines. Among these practitioners, there were philosophy, language, educational-psychology, holistic, and neuroscience based definitions of learning theory.

Parallel categories can be found in the learning literature. For example, in their chapter *How People Learn: Introduction to Learning Theories*, Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) observed similar types of learning theories: philosophy-based learning theories, psychology-based learning theories, and progressive learning theory – a theory that emphasizes guiding curriculum development in a manner that connects to the development and interests of the individual. In philosophy-based learning theories, Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) quote Aristotle and Plato and their beliefs on knowledge and truth, and acknowledged that the mind creates simple ideas; "these simple ideas combine to develop complex ideas (Hilgard & Bower, 1975)" (p. 4). Meanwhile, psychologists "began conducting objective tests to study how people learn, and to discover the best approach to learning" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001 p. 5), leading to psychology-based learning theories. Psychology-based learning theories differed from the philosophy-based ones in Darling-Hammond et al.'s work in their focus on behaviourist methods and cognitive processes, and "the idea that all learning occurs in a cultural context and involves social interactions" (p. 7).

Philosophy-based definition. When Philip, with a background in philosophy, elaborated on his definition of learning theories he focused on the distinction between belief and knowledge. He kept referring to epistemological theories and stated, "If I'm studying an epistemological theory I'm testing it to see how it works in my life." When asked about the idea of a learning

theory, Philip instead defined knowledge, discussed the nature of knowledge and explained the basis and rationale for accepting knowledge. He stated that it is important to accept only ideas or concepts that are true; defining true ideas as those that can be demonstrated to be so, ideas that can be justified. Unless we can justify a concept or idea, Philip notes, it is merely an opinion, not knowledge. He emphasized that it is not rational to accept opinion as knowledge by stating that,

> Epistemology in general makes the distinction between belief and knowledge which constructivism doesn't. So knowledge in the classical sense of epistemology is a belief that is justified if you have good reasons for holding it, you actually do hold it and it's actually true. So if those three conditions are met then in classical epistemology then you can call it knowledge. Otherwise it's a belief, and that doesn't mean it's a bad thing but it doesn't meet the standards of knowledge.

Philip notes that he brings his philosophical perspective when investigating learning theories. He believes that it is important when defining and conceptualizing learning theories to see how they differentiate between knowledge and beliefs. When arguing why he is not a constructivist, he notes that constructivism fails to address many epistemological questions and doesn't distinguish between knowledge and belief. He further elaborates,

> If you actually follow constructivism to its logical conclusion, nothing can be false and that is self-contradictory and conceptually incoherent. My background is knowledge too [and] if something is conceptually incoherent, you can't accept it. It's like talking about square triangles.

Based on Philip's comments, he seems to have a philosophical-based definition of learning theories, and he uses his background in philosophy to investigate and distinguish between theories.

Language-based definition. During her interview, Michelle defined learning theories from a language-based perspective. When asked about her definition of learning theories, she focused on the communicative approach as a learning theory – a particular approach to language learning. Her understanding of learning theories acknowledged people's own personal context and lived experiences and building activities around those. Learning theories according to Michelle provide one with a sort of parallelism by constantly comparing how people experience learning. Her conceptualization of learning theories would inform her of how to get others to use language in a situation, a real-life situation, with authentic elements. Having taught French, Michelle gave the example that learning theories help one understand, "When you go to work in France, what actually happens. But we would link that to what they were doing, how they were experiencing it." She then gave several examples of thinking about "language constructs, new grammatical constructs, vocabulary constructs but you are getting them to use those constructs in a real-life situation that they would really live through and you try to make it as authentic as possible." From a language perspective, Michelle emphasized the importance of developing constructs in a real-life situation – and this is how she understood learning theories.

Educational-psychology-based definition. This group of developers seemed to define learning theories using educational-psychological principles. These principles can be summed up in the slogan: 'There is a better way.' They emphasize the important role played by symbolic, and cognitive processes in psychological functioning. Debbie, Samantha, Anne, and Naomi seemed to believe that one's behavior changes as a result of stimuli found in the external environment as well as within themselves. Hence, their approach to understanding learning theories related to investigating the relationship between cognitive, behavioural, psychological, and environmental influences. They emphasized learning through the construction of mental models – what follows is the uptake of information and the process of selecting, organizing and transforming it.

Learning theories inform their actions by offering schemas of the modeled activities either by experience or observation.

Holistic-based definition. Claire and Julia, whose prior disciplines were in science, had a holistic perspective on learning theories that combined experience, perception, reflection, cognition, and behaviour. They both defined learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through direct experience. When asked to elaborate on their definition of learning theories, they instead mentioned Kolb's learning cycle as they broke down learning into a series of manageable steps and testing those steps "and you know," Claire added "this goes back to the philosophy of science doesn't it?" I believe, from their comments, that they see learning theories as mainly experiential and necessary for providing a holistic perspective. This category parallels what Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) called the progressive learning theory. "The progressives embraced Piaget's ideas about child development, Vygotsky's ideas about socially situated learning and the construction of knowledge, and the age-old emphases on both experience and thinking or reflection as a basis of learning" (p. 7). They related different learning experiences that they have had to each section of that cycle and thought of those as useful in better understanding their future teaching and learning experiences. They found this perspective on learning theories helped them dispel many myths, and gain information and multiple perspectives. They both mentioned challenge and cognitive dissonance when defining learning theories "and the idea that people's misunderstandings are actually harder to unlearn, their misconstructed framework is actually very hard to unlearn and relearn new things and to do that you need something that you cannot just explain and so cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance to me is a very powerful thing." (Julia) Developers are consistently confronted by issues that challenge their practice. Similarly Claire defined learning theories as having that "aha moment and that is what higher education is all about, when we are challenged to have that" and

added “that’s what I grab on to in terms of learning theories.” When I asked her about her understanding of the idea of a learning theory she noted,

> If I think of learning theories, then I would talk about experiential learning, transformative learning, then I would talk about I’m not sure again, when you think about critical reflection it’s a practice right? So I talk broadly to kind of cover all bases. I kind of think of scholarship more broadly.

Neuroscience-based definition. With a background in neuroscience, Lauren defined learning theories as the way the human brain works. She noted, “I work in the brain, right? So learning in the brain means changed neuropathways, strengthen certain ones and weaken others so that [learners] actually have a change in neuropathways which leads to a change in behaviour.” She kept referring to the research in the brain, knowing how the brain works and “how to build synapses.” To her, learning theories meant understanding the different ways that people use to anchor learning. She further elaborated,

> The more ways that you can anchor learning or thoughts in the brain, information in the brain, the more you can connect those together and the more chance is that you are going to recall them later. If you have just one way of learning then it can’t make that connection for whatever reason, you got a block in that connection, if you block that connection you block that learning…

In that vein, even though Darling-Hammond et al., didn’t label this type of theory, they documented the importance that the brain plays in learning and argued that, “learning changes the physical structure of the brain through the process of continuous interactions between the learner and the external environment. Differences in human processing and performance have been

found to be related to different brain structures and functioning" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001, p. 10).

Summary

This chapter revealed how a subset of educational developers in Canada described learning theories and the meanings they subscribed to them. The picture painted in the data suggests that these developers don't see learning theories as formal academic theories aimed at understanding a particular situation; rather, they see them as perceptual knowledge that is personally relevant. Developers concerned with practical wisdom tailor theories to the specific needs and concerns of the individual and the situation. The data also revealed that their understanding of learning theories in general reflects concepts they have learned in their prior disciplines. Their understanding and conception of learning theories is central to their use of learning theories. Chapter seven explores further how learning theories fit into the developer's practice, summarizing and discussing the place that theories have in their work, by identifying three subgroups of developers.

CHAPTER SEVEN: USES OF LEARNING THEORIES AMONG DEVELOPERS

Introduction

Atkinson cites Ball (1995), saying that:

> …theory is a way of 'thinking otherwise'. Theory offers a language which can be used to challenge existing ideas. However, teachers (and others) may not acknowledge the theories they use, since the theory may have become part of their subconscious thinking and be tacit rather than explicit knowledge. (Atkinson, 2000, p. 325)

In recounting the study participants' stories and experiences in understanding theories, these individuals differed in the ways they claimed learning theories informed their work. This chapter which begins with a brief section situating the categories and the participants' experiences continues to provide insights to the topic that began in chapter six with respect to the participant's conceptions and views of learning theories. I asked a number of questions during the initial and follow-up interviews to get an understanding of how learning theories fit in the practice of these educational developers. My questions included prompts relating to the artifacts that participants sent me (if they thought of any learning theories and which ones they considered when they developed the artifacts), and to the five main learning theories that I showed them (what do they know about them and to what extent those theories impact their practice). I asked similar questions in the follow-up interviews to understand the extent to which developers consciously take specific learning theories into consideration when they do their work.

The study findings identified three groups of developers in terms of their use of learning theories: a) developers who had a tendency to implicitly use learning theories – having more of an implicit knowledge of theories in the form of abstract representations, and focus on practical

explorations for achieving desired outcomes, b) developers who had a tendency to consciously use learning theories – taking more of a comprehensive approach by examining their assumptions and focusing on causes and effects that influence their practice, and c) one participant who shared views similar to both groups described above. Each group is discussed in this chapter, highlighting examples, impact, and tensions germane to their use of theories.

These descriptions emerged during data analysis. Returning to the literature, I could see how Argyris and Schön's (1978) descriptions of single and double loop learning provided a framework for thinking about these categories of developers. In their seminal book, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness,* Argyris and Schön (1974) presented the concept of 'theories of action' and they further conceptualized learning in relation to these theories. The authors suggested that in order to become a more effective professional, learning has to involve the detection and correction of error. This can be done by building and re-building one's theories, which takes place at two different levels. They labelled those levels single loop learning and double loop learning, using terms originally coined by Ross Ashby in 1952. In single-loop learning, individuals connect a strategy for action with a desired outcome. When there is a difference between the expected and obtained outcome, people will automatically take in feedback, and modify their actions accordingly by trying a different strategy. Any type of reflection in single loop learning is aimed at making the approach more effective, as learners operationalize rather than question their goals and beliefs. In double loop learning individuals question the underlying assumptions behind techniques, goals, values, and policies that led to their actions in the first place. Such learning leads to an alteration of the governing variables and, thus, to a re-evaluation and reframing of learning systems.

Argyris and Schön (1978) claimed that single loop learning has its own value; however, the theories that are used in the process confirm with principles that would help these individuals

achieve their existing goals. These authors argued that, when people continue with their existing theories indefinitely, they do not confront the dilemmas and inconsistencies that arise in their practice. In other words, without ever examining and confronting their evolving theories, professionals run the risk of becoming a 'prisoner' of their own theories. Meanwhile, double loop learning, is associated with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), and the feeling of discomfort that arises when professionals encounter information that is inconsistent with their beliefs. Such a trigger, results in learners examining the rationale (assumptions, alternatives, implications, influences) surrounding the educational objectives (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1978) and confronting the sources of tension. Argyris and Schön (1978) argue that this process of becoming aware of one's own theories and valuing confrontation is fundamental in resolving dilemmas and in allowing a professional to grow. The categories derived from the study findings also map onto Dewey's (1913) distinction between the practical approach, which emphasizes the ends, and the understanding approach, which emphasizes "the means – the causes – which bring it about" (p. 83).

Acknowledging Argyris and Schön (1978), Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) also used *triple* loop learning – an approach which serves to link all of the local learning units into a unified learning organization. While single loop learning asks questions pertaining to strategies and double loop learning asks questions regarding the underlying assumptions, values, and goals; triple loop learning occurs "when the essential principles on which the organization is founded come into discussion" and involves "the development of new principles, with which an organization can proceed to a subsequent phase" (Swieringa & Wierdsma, 1992, pp. 41, 42). The participants in this study whose data suggest they are implicit about their learning theories seem to act as single loop learners; as opposed to those who are conscious of learning theories who seem to have characteristics of double loop learners. There is also some evidence of triple loop

learning in a sense that to accomplish their tasks, practitioners learn how to tap into the collective knowledge/wisdom embedded in various units of the organization (this is further explained at the end of chapter eight when I discuss the collective knowledge of educational developers).

It is important to point out that this categorization is an oversimplification and is intended primarily to characterize commonalities, while still recognizing important differences. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, the different categories are described as if they were entirely separate, when, in fact, both ways of acting could be found within each of these individuals at certain times. The process of teasing apart these categories also helps bring in the literature around uses of learning theories and relate it to the identified categories. Because my intention in this study is to understand how learning theories fit in the developer's work, I describe what the study participants said in their interviews. Concurrently I bring in themes that emerged from the analysis of the artifacts and the results of the Teaching Perspectives Inventory that help in triangulating and further understanding the results.

Implicit Use of Learning Theories

The term implicit learning was first coined by Arthur Reber (1967) to describe a process during which subjects gain knowledge without intending to and without becoming aware of the knowledge they have acquired. According to Seger (1994), implicit learning is the process of learning complex information without complete verbalisable knowledge of what is learned. Psychological perspectives are helpful in this respect as they are broadening the concept of tacit or implicit knowledge, by focusing on other concepts such as implicit emotion, attitude, learning, and so forth (Eich, Kihlstrom, Bower, Forgas, & Niedenthal 2000; Damasio, 1999). Drawing upon Reber's understanding of the concept, Eraut (2004) defines implicit learning as "the acquisition of knowledge [gained] independently of conscious attempts to learn and in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned" (p. 250). When people learn implicitly,

their knowledge is tacit and "may be used uncritically because people either believe that it works well for them or lack the time and/or disposition to search for anything better" (Eraut, 2004, p. 253). He contrasts implicit learning with reactive learning, which is intentional and tends to occur "in the middle of the action when there is little time to think" (p. 250) and deliberative learning, which is goal-oriented and represents a devotion of time and effort toward acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Meanwhile, implicit theories are described "as personal constructions about particular phenomenon that resides in the minds of individuals (Sternberg, Conway, Ketron & Bernstein, 1981)" (Smith, Runne, & Covalt, 1991, p. 2). Furnham (1988) describes implicit theories as: ambiguous and inconsistent, descriptive of types or categories of phenomena, often confuse cause and effect, and are deductive rather than inductive. Rando and Menges (1991) define implicit theories as "our individual submerged rationales about events in the world and about our own behavior in the world. Sometimes events cause us to try to explain something that we never really thought about before" (p. 7). The concept of implicit learning theories has been elaborated by Burgoyne and Stuart (1977) defining them as the type of wisdom that exists more likely in the form of the pragmatic wisdom of the craftsman, rather than in the form of the more explicit, generalizable and testable principles of the professional. We clearly see this with the participants in this study. Seven of the 11 study participants indicated preference for an implicit use of learning theories – the learning theories were practical explorations for purposes of generating specific outcome. Their comments revealed a lack of interest in understanding learning theories and investigating them to achieve a thorough understanding. The implicit users were characterized by: focusing on generating practical outcomes, counting on 'what works' and 'trial and error', and by their inability to verbalize their knowledge of learning theories.

Focus on generating a practical outcome. These developers implicitly consider a range of factors/conditions that they believe to be important, including learning theories – "a couple of different things that you sort of massage into something that makes sense" – that would optimize a desired outcome, and much of their practice is organized around this objective. This claim is supported by their statements made during both interviews including, "I am probably less wedded to a theory than I am to the outcome. So if I found out that this theory was actually getting in the way of learning then I would say time to get rid of that theory." (Julia) Just like single loop learners go through four elements, namely: 1) decision-taking; 2) actions to carry out decisions; 3) feedback on the results of their actions; and 4) investigating the gap where they are and where they want to be based on their purpose, so does this group of developers. Their first response to the mismatch between intention and outcome is to search for an alternative strategy and they involve in this learning process decisions, action, feedback and evaluation. Since they operationalize and look for another strategy that would work, these developers do not actually become aware of their learning theories as they do not confront them. When developers in this group come across a theory that doesn't fit with anything that they think or do, then they are going to reject it. Most of them feel they need to know "what's out there and recognize the signature ones" (Samantha) but not necessarily invest themselves in theories if they already achieve the desired outcomes and since "no one even calls upon them to do that."(Samantha)

The goal of these developers is to determine how to make a desired outcome occur, the most efficient strategy being varying all variables believed to be causal, including learning theories. As a result, these practitioners tend to rework traditional academic concepts in order to use them. Many comments from the developers in this group referred to a translation of learning theories needed to serve practical ends and accommodate the characteristics of the audience – a statement supported by their comments during the interviews, such as,

> It is always about simplifying things to make them practical, to be able to explain them in clear language, to take the complex and make it simple … I think it's about translating, being able to translate and mobilize that information. (Naomi)

Similarly, other developers concurred with not using theories in their pure form but taking elements of them and using those in their practice,

> In psychology there are those people who put things into groups and those who don't, right. And for me I've always been a kind of person that will see gray instead of black and white and will take from the various theories whatever's going to be, whatever seems most appropriate. (Anne)

Hence, what they have is implicit knowledge consisting of abstract representations rather than verbatim representations of learning theories. They all recognized constraints in consciously using learning theories and note that they didn't quite believe in the logical, rational way of thinking.

Their statements emphasized how learning theories are not clearly systematized but merged with other variables to produce a specific outcome. As one of them noted, "when I put something together I might anticipate that ok if I ask them to do this, what are some things that are good that can come out of it." (Samantha) They all made claims similar to what Patricia stated in that they had to model good practice and "walk the talk but not necessarily cutting it all up into theories as theories don't tell you, well what will I do in the classroom that is different tomorrow in practicum." As one of them stated,

> I think I actually really like working with outcomes even though I don't like saying that I'm working with outcomes but I guess that's a strategy that I use getting people to talk through that process, taking them in the end... that's generally my approach to work through that outcome based approach. (Naomi)

Anne described their role as the “midwife”, or “the good cop” or “consultant” and commented that she doesn’t relate things to herself in terms of learning theories, and doesn’t really confront them or the dilemmas associated with theories, as her focus is more on the outcome. As she further elaborated on her role, she noted,

> My role is so we do think of it as good cop, bad cop. I am the good cop. I walk in and I say what do you want to achieve, what are you trying to do? I can tell you what is necessary, and help you do what is necessary in order to meet the requirements for undergraduate degree level expectations, to meet the requirements for new program development, or if they want help with, you know, designing assignments activities and all that I would help them with that…I’m there, I know about the process, I know how it should end up and I want a good outcome. (Anne)

The interviewees in this group were interested in the end result rather than causes and effects as noted by claims such as, “if that works for you, great, and if you achieve the same results and it doesn’t matter how you get there, as long as you get to where you want to go and that’s the place to be.” (Samantha) Their emphasis is on the task at hand and on producing a good outcome not in investigating all the important variables and their impact on the results. As one developer noted,

> Do I think about learning theories in terms of sort of you know the names of which I have to some degree looked at but it’s not something that informs my work in any formal way. And I think that’s just because I personally have this really strong focus on policy structure and frameworks… frameworks in the sense of like you know developing an assignment and figuring out do this first and then do this and do this. So not necessarily sort of theoretical frameworks but actually practical frameworks… it’s more about how does this institution work and how do we maximize the teaching rather than bringing in particular ideas or initiatives to this approach. (Naomi)

When asked about how learning theories fit in the workshops that they design and deliver, the developers emphasized the practical nature of their work, as one of them noted, "I was probably thinking more [like asking,] OK, what are the technical aspects, what are the technical pieces of developing a dossier, a philosophy statement?…Overall, I just want to provide them with tools and resources and exposure to others." (Samantha)

This group seemed to identify the variables needed to solve particular problems and questions and transform them into technical principles that can be used to achieve the desired outcome with their audience – a claim supported by statements such as,

> So giving them examples, so we try to collect examples of work that instructors at [this] university are using in their own courses so we can say look this isn't some theoretical abstract notion that has no connection to real practice. This person in linguistics is using it in their classroom and this is how she does it. (Michelle)

They all made claims suggesting converting what they know into technical principles rather than deliberately using learning theories. As one participant noted, "and the critical theory, I take a very practical stance on it…I am not big into theorizing things, how is taking that viewpoint going to help me in a real world context?" (Samantha) As single loop learners, they try to match their actions with their outcomes and correct them accordingly by changing their actions if mismatches occur, but without necessarily critically examining the governing variables for action. Overall, they indicated a lack of interest in deliberately using learning theories and emphasized generating outcomes tailored to a particular topic and audience,

> So when I put something together I might anticipate that ok if I ask them to do this, what are some things that are good that can come out of it, that I can anticipate these are the outcomes of that activity. And then, so you try and think of all the different things based on who's coming and most of the time you know who's coming but not always….Let's

> use the teaching dossier one. By the end of the session they should have an outline of what their table of content in their dossier would be, that they have gone through the process that if I say this how do I contextualize that, and what evidence am I going to provide…. and then overall I just want to provide them with tools and resources and exposure to others. (Samantha)

Emphasis on what works. Individuals in this group identify, and convey theories of learning, that "they just know over time what won't work and what will work." (Samantha) They examine learning theories within the context of their own practice and act based on what has worked for them in the past – a claim supported by statements such as,

> It really depends what I'm teaching and the [learning theories] that I use. [The ones] I think would be most appropriate in a particular circumstance with a particular audience… I had done a lot of workshops for engineers and people in the sciences who are quick to say oh god I don't know anything about teaching. They will admit that. I am a scientist; I am an engineer so you teach me something. So I know with them that I have to be very cut, and dry, and efficient and somber. In humanities, then I have far more open, well you know, maybe a postmodernist perspective here…Well that's what I try to do. Because I'm not an expert in all these areas, I might miscalculate. (Anne)

Consistent with what Berer and Luckmann (1966) call "recipe knowledge," this type of knowledge is related to "pragmatic competence in routine performance" (p. 42). When it comes to learning theories, they rely on trial and error, and their previous experiences in interacting with the audience, most of them stating,

> It sounds terrible but you know kind of something that you learn on the job. And I think that every consultation that I have is a bank of ideas for the next one… I wouldn't say that there is a particular source or set of information that I go back to. It's really something

> that just builds every time and whenever I do a research project here I learn from that and what works from that and get that to the bank…I probably don't think about these issues consciously very often, they certainly do implicitly inform the work that I do or there are things that I have internalized whether it's through my own perspectives or my own experience of seeing other people and what has worked and I do think it is important to be aware of …although I think it's important I don't necessarily thinks it happens or that I do that. (Naomi)

Indeed, in the dynamic contexts in which people work, "their actions seemed to be largely governed by rules and routines, with decision-making in a studied, deliberative sense taking a minor role in their interactive thinking" (Carter, 1990, p. 27). Talking about actions that we carry out spontaneously, Schön (1983) states: "We are often unaware of having learned to do those things; we simply find ourselves doing them" (p. 84). The participants in this category tend not to pay particular attention to learning theories since they would have to be considered in the context of many other variables which affect their practice. These developers are informed not only by the empirical and personal evidence of what works to produce a desired outcome, but also take into account the complexity of the personal, social, and cultural world of their practice. Learning theories are couched into theoretical principles and merged with other variables to respond to the particular contexts, demands, uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities of these developers' practice. They consider some variables more informative in a particular situation than others. These developers don't find it necessary to verbalize learning theories and be aware of them as having an implicit use of learning theories has worked for this group so far – a claim supported by their statements in the interviews including,

> I just know I have to think in a certain way to do what I need to do. And it's when that doesn't work for what I am working on that I step back and look at other ways. And there

> is nothing that I have come across that doesn't say that's not a good way to operate from and unless something comes along which just puts me in a whole new… (Samantha)

Most participants in this group have developed some knowledge of learning theories in the midst of their practice as they have interacted with their clients, often improvising as they go, and relying on their assumptions. A good example of this is Lauren's statement: "Intuitively, I have been doing things for years and then I start reading these kind of papers and go [think], Oh, there is actually a scientific basis for this." They all made claims during both interviews suggesting that what has worked in the past has served them to confirm or dismiss initial hunches they may have and they "can indirectly sort of learn about things without knowing labels" (Anne) including,

> I think it's important to try to keep current with the thinking of what are best practices and to be aware of learning theories. Now the trouble there is how do you find out about them, especially well-crafted theories – they usually percolate out of practice. And then someone doesn't start with a learning theory and then it gets ploughed. Can't think of an example. (Anne)

Practitioners in this category seemed to be mindful of not only what has worked in the past but also what works for them, where do they operate from, what are their comfort zones – a claim supported by statements such as,

> I am trying to match what I know how to do with what I want [the audience] to get out of the course… I have been able to pull out certain factors that are common, certain behaviours, certain approaches that are effective, that we know will work…So I now have this bank, the sense of what good teaching can look like, and I draw on that as well. (Michelle)

Similarly, when asked about strategies that she used with her audience, Michelle indicated that she tended to pull out tools she found useful and then state to the participants, "Now, this is

something that I found useful maybe it will be helpful to you." As Samantha noted, she "draws what she needs to draw on to do the work" and further added,

> There has to be a fit there in terms of what's comfortable for you and meeting the needs of the project and the people you are working with at any given times…It comes back to what are your comfort zones and I know what my comfort zones are and I seek out what I need to make sure that I am doing something that I can operate in that environment.

Educational developers in this group were not interested in consciously using learning theories as they considered them as abstract and didn't find them "terribly useful as a way of thinking about what [they] do." (Patricia) As she further noted, "if I can't see how [theory] works, there is less reason to promote it." Many participants in this category expressed an unfavourable attitude towards learning theories – which was clear by comments such as,

> Many theories, capital T, you mentioned are so abstract and they don't necessarily give you the connection and ultimately it is very hard to differentiate in terms of those processes which one would make more sense. So you know what would be the mechanism that makes something work? That's a clinical psychologist question I guess. It has got to be there. It has got to make sense and things that are too abstract aren't very helpful… (Patricia)

They described theories as having little connection to the contextual nuances of their practice landscape, expressing mistrust in learning theories. These developers were satisfied with an implicit use of learning theories as they didn't feel they were at a point where they could distinguish 'the good ones' through the various learning theories – a claim supported by statements such as,

> I don't know how important it is for me to focus on them in what I am doing. I guess as a scientist we don't yet know everything about the brain so why am I trying to believe some

> particular theory about learning when I think all of them are missing something. I haven't found one theory that I can really fall in love with kind of thing so I am just kind of leery of them… (Lauren)

Similarly, when this group was discussing learning theories they emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of their practice and the difficulty of incorporating learning theories. A good example of this emerged in the discussion with Michelle about critical theory. She stated that,

> Critical theory to a certain extent if we include literature to back up any of the claims that we make in our sessions but honestly we don't use it very much because we are dealing with interdisciplinary groups so doctors from all domains and students from all domains; that if we bring in one theory it can limit what happens in the workshop. Instead of opening up it can actually shut things down because it causes people to take positions and to disagree and agree.

They all made claims during interviews suggesting that they couldn't pinpoint a particular learning theory that they would trust to guide their work. Broadly, these developers seem to appreciate and value other ways of knowing and argue for knowing not just how it is defined by a certain group of people as legitimate knowledge, but also how other types of personal and social knowing are important. They note that in many cases experience allows them to predict and guide their actions rather than learning theories.

Inability to verbalize learning theories. The educational developers in this category did not easily acknowledge the theories they used. When asked about their understanding of the idea of a learning theory, broadly, they expressed their intention "to ask [me] what that was" (Naomi) as they struggled to understand what is meant by learning theories. They expressed frustration with the literature and its 'ambiguity' in explaining learning theories. As one of them noted,

> I struggle with this. So a learning theory can be a theory of learning so how people come to learn, or it can be a theory about sometimes it's used about teaching methods sometimes it can be an internal, sometimes it seems to be other things, sometimes it means a theory, sometimes it actually means a model, sometimes it means a hypothesis, sometimes it just means research. (Julia)

According to them, the literature didn't do justice in clearly-defining learning theories, which made them 'uneasy' about learning theories and confused over the competing descriptions of theories. They had formed their synthesis of learning theories that they had internalized through their own experience and in working with others. When presented with the five main learning theories, most participants in this group expressed difficulty in understanding those labels and often asked what is meant by humanism, for example. As one developer noted, "Well, look I have to say of these I would not be able to give you a definition of humanism, behaviourism, or cognitivism." (Naomi) Similarly, another participant's response to the question of her understanding of learning theories was: "What a damn good question. It's been so long since I actually looked at learning theories. I mean what they were…So now, it is all kind of merged into what I do believe and don't believe." (Anne) Thus, indicating that she wasn't very conscious of learning theories as they all blended with other variables impacting her practice. A good example of this is Julia's statement, "it has become all mashed in my mind to tell you the truth. It's far less clear than I would like it to be because I read it so long ago that it's incorporated, now it's internalized, it's just what I believe."

Most developers in this category had completed the TPI several times before but the majority of them indicated a lack of thoughtfulness and ability to explain changes among actions, beliefs and intentions in their recent TPI scores – a claim supported by statements made by them in interviews, such as "my intentions are much lower than my actions, than what I actually do

that's an interesting gap…and I wonder what caused the gap and what's changing, what am I changing." (Julia) Similarly, Michelle expressed difficulty in explaining changes in her TPI scores stating that,

> I had taken the inventory I think I mentioned that and my dominant perspective was developmental, but apprenticeship was the close second. So basically this is just reverse…I have no idea [why that is]. I don't know why. I don't know what I answered differently so I took this inventory about 3 years ago and the items have changed because they are always working on it…The social reform perspective surprised me how low it was. I don't know why that is.

Most of them did not relate the perspectives of the TPI to learning theories. Some of them asked me about the learning theories that related to the five perspectives of the TPI and the rest of them hadn't really thought about the extent to which the perspectives were consistent with their learning theories. This claim is supported by statements such as, "I don't have an immediate learning theory that pops into mind but I suspect it's all consistent. I hope it's all consistent." (Anne)

The difficulty in explaining discrepancies among the elements of the TPI corresponds with the developer's answers to one of the questions in the initial interviews regarding how their learning theories have changed through the years and what has motivated these changes. This group of practitioners was unable to isolate learning theories from the myriad of other variables that affect their practice and thus unable to articulate the nature of change of their learning theories – a claim supported by them in interviews, such as, "I think I am not sure. Like all those things, like I learned about them in school, but I never had to practice any of them. They didn't have a lot of meaning." (Samantha) Even though this group acknowledged that there are other

"theories out there perhaps more appropriate for the topic, audience, and context" (Samantha), they were not able to articulate these theories.

Moreover, when asked about where in the spectrum they would position themselves, participants in this group identified with either the middle of the spectrum – with learning theories as implicit, embedded or internalized and merged with other variables – or with the far left of the spectrum, with learning theories as irrelevant and having no interest in investigating them or needing to understand how they work. They all made claims suggesting their implicit use of learning theories and focus on the outcomes they need to produce for their audience, including,

> It's more like a collage of all those ideas together and if I had to go back and really if I wanted to individuate and delineate between them and be very clear I would probably had to go back and revisit things but right now because I don't have to think about it that way it's because I know, there is this theory and this theory and this theory and they all come together and they make sense for what I need to do and it's only if I needed to tease them apart and be very concrete about that, then I would have to go back and be able to do that but there is nothing in my context at the moment which demands that I do that. (Samantha)

All the other participants in this category emphasized having their learning theories implicit stating that "elements of them are in there." (Julia) Developers who identified with the first end of the spectrum were excited about learning but were "very uneasy about the whole learning theory." (Lauren) As she further noted,

> I am just kind of leery of them and I don't find them all that relevant. I really believe that every human being really does want to learn, people actually want to learn, I guess it's not that important how. (Lauren)

Similarly, when asked about her tendency to use them, she stated, “My first inclination is that I don’t use them but I don’t think that’s logical. So I am obviously not consciously aware of them so I need to become more consciously aware of which ones I actually claim to use.”

As previously mentioned, participants were also asked to provide 2-3 artifacts that they had produced. I conducted a document analysis and also asked them about the artifacts during the interviews. Participants in this group indicated that they did not think of any particular learning theories when they developed the artifacts – a claim supported by statements during both the initial and follow-up interviews such as, “I was probably thinking more ok what are the technical aspects, what are the technical pieces of developing a dossier, a philosophy statement.” (Samantha) They were more focused on the outcome and how their audience will perceive that. As one developer noted, “So when I think about creating a document or a presentation or a workshop I think about how people will be using, receiving and processing the information and what they can do with it after.” (Michelle) Their interview comments indicated that they put together those artifacts for one of the following two reasons: (1) they wanted to better understand a particular topic and produced a document on it, or (2) from a need to identify best practices and share it with the educational development community. For example, Anne chose as her artifacts a paper on inquiry, a link at her centre’s website, and a summary on undergraduate degree level expectations in all Ontario Universities. During her interviews, Anne mentioned that she included the link and summary to reflect her current typical work, and her focus on curriculum development. She tried to identify best practices and pitfalls in that area and share that work with the group that has an interest in curriculum within the educational development community. Meanwhile, she focused on the material on inquiry to understand more about this topic and the way it was used in the institution. Anne noted that in none of those artifacts had she thought of

learning theories consciously; rather, she was driven by best practices in the field and trying to implement and share those.

Conscious[3] Use of Learning Theories

Based on developer's comments, only three participants from the 11 interviewed seemed to consciously use learning theories. They noted that their goal is comprehensiveness; and, all three had a tendency to deliberately investigate and explore causal relationships among learning theories. If dissonance is detected, as they identify goals, values, and objectives, they address it by challenging their underlying assumptions and theories. This group of developers is characterized by focusing on the conditions (means and causes) that bring about a certain result, and by their ability to articulate learning theories.

Focus on conditions. Developers in this category question how they know, critically modifying their theories and building ideas about how things might be done differently. Rather than focusing on learning outcomes, they emphasize the inputs and how learning theories influence those. They tend to pursue causal explanations and look at theories as a source that would enable them prediction and control. All three claimed that theories provide an essential infrastructure for their everyday thinking and practice, and they consciously try to apply theories to their practice. They noted that they continuously investigate learning theories and critically analyze the extent to which they are consistent and logical. To them, learning outcomes remain indeterminate and cannot be judged in advance; this is distinguishable from the other group who were guided by action to bring a desired product or artifact into existence. They seemed

[3] My preferred term is conscious rather than explicit to stay true to the coding that emerged from the data analysis. Also the literature acknowledges ambiguity when it comes to the different terms used and supports many other synonyms to refer to the implicit/conscious dichotomy such as the terms procedural/declarative (Cohen & Squire, 1980), implicit/deliberative, and tacit/explicit (Eraut, 2000, 2004).

concerned with not just knowing what and how, but with knowing why, and all three developers in this category claimed that their relationship with the world and understanding is based on theoretical knowledge and on knowing. Like double loop learners as described by Argyris and Schön (1978), these practitioners question the governing variables themselves, and subject those to critical scrutiny. By asking a series of 'why's,' these individuals are able to consider all possible variables when approaching a problem – as would double loop learners. They can identify the assumptions that underlie their goals, values and strategies, which enables them to then question those assumptions and have a clearer understanding of causes. These practitioners seemed to believe that there are "some structural truths out there, maybe they are not capital T truth but people have worked long and hard for a couple of thousand years coming up with these ideas." (Manuel)

Developers in this category appear preoccupied with understanding relations among causes and effects in learning theories. They seem to appreciate and see value in theory and believe that "if you have a breadth of learning theories, then you can actually say, you know what this might not be the best approach." (Debbie) The people in this category are more selective and critical about the evidence presented on learning theories, as they pay greater attention to establish which variables are causal. Recognizing this category, Dewey (1913) suggested that practice can be considered: as practical exploration aimed towards producing a desired outcome, or as investigation for achieving comprehension and generalizations. He noted:

> It is commonplace that the fundamental principle of science is connected with the relation of cause and effect. Interest in this relation begins on the practical side. Some effect is aimed at, is desired and worked for, and attention is given to the conditions for producing it. At first the interest in the achievement of the end predominates, but in the degree in

> which this interest is bound up with a thoughtful effort, interest in the end or effect is of necessity transferred to interest in the means – the causes – which bring it about. (p. 83)

This description seems consistent with these three developers, as they claim to want to understand and explore learning. Michael, Philip and Debbie examine each theory they encounter to analyze the underlying assumptions and their limitations. They complete systematic tests of a variety of learning theories to see how the theory fits in with what they are investigating as,

> There might be a period at the beginning where in order to find out whether it should be integrated into your practice, you just might need to experiment for a while and try it out sort of role-play it to see how it can change but the eventual goal should be integration. (Philip)

The developers in this category value theory and are interested in investigating how it intersects with their practice – a claim supported by comments including,

> The example I gave last week, behaviourism, was perfect. We had talked about stickers and how even in adults we can apply stickers, purely behaviourist. So when we separated the groups I gave one of them stickers and I said I bet you when you get together you will talk about them in a way that there is a value to it. Sure enough you know the Skinner box; sure enough people went in line for coffee and how come you guys have stickers. Because I actually told my group the kinds of comments they are going to get and what they can expect and sure enough that's exactly what happened. They are getting those comments from the other group and that's pure behaviourism. So there is a time when you say oh adults don't go with these things but yes they do. It's just that we won't admit to it as much. So for me that was a teachable moment about behaviourism in action, you know cause and effect. (Debbie)

Similarly, when Philip explained his standards in evaluating learning theories and the importance of distinguishing between belief and knowledge, and basic beliefs, he stated that, "I can't even speak to you if I don't believe in cause and effect; then I don't believe there is any reason for me making certain sounds pushing air up my throat to result in things you can understand, it's cause and effect." Even if their knowledge of learning theories is not called upon, it was apparent that they would still investigate and consciously use theories – a claim supported by statements made during the interviews, including,

> Even if it turns out that I am doing no lecturing at all and or it turns out that I have 15 theories surveyed maybe 2 of them would come out in some way in the session; I think I still need to know how the things relate to each other for my own integrity. I have to know that if I'm telling somebody something that there is a reason for it or at least that there are promising reasons for it because sometimes things are preliminary, you don't know. (Philip)

They consciously try to apply theories to their practice to evaluate the evidence from the scholarly literature in teaching and learning. They claimed that once they start doing that, they realized that a lot of the literature doesn't integrate the theoretical and the practical really well – a statement supported by comments such as,

> We were trying to get people to work on the self-evaluation strategies for their courses so we used Brookfield's 4 lenses, but we added a fifth lens because Brookfield has his zeal on the empirical literature entirely. So, we added the fifth lens but the question came up and we had to be honest with those students, yeah actually you need both the theoretical and empirical literature in order to have evidence. If you just have the empirical information about the theory, we just have information, we can't do anything, we can't make any predictions, we can't generalize it's useless to you and a lot of the teaching and

> learning literature doesn't integrate those very well and the standards for evaluating evidence arguments the logic and the rigor of critical thought is really often quite poor. (Philip)

Developers in this category investigate and explore why they believe in some theories and not others, emphasizing that they have a moral responsibility to ensure that their beliefs are justified. As Philip noted, "Because our beliefs affect our actions, because our beliefs affect what happens to other people and to ourselves, then we have a responsibility to ensure they are justified." When he argued as to why he is not a constructivist he stated,

> I am not a constructivist, which makes me odd in the educational development world. Educational developers tend to be constructivist, they tend not to know much about constructivism but the default theory is that they assume it. And it's a very poor theory, constructivism. My background is philosophy so I don't know of any respectful epistemologist who would call himself a constructivist. I see the appeal to a certain mindset because it seems to be consistent with sort of liberal moral norms of acceptance, multiculturalism and so forth. So the appeal it's not so much that it's a good epistemological theory…but I don't think it makes sense on a lot of epistemological questions and epistemological realities that we have to face, for instance, the distinction between knowledge and belief. If you actually follow constructivism to its logical conclusion, nothing can be false and that means that is inherently self-contradictory and conceptually incoherent. It's like talking about square triangles.

Ability to articulate learning theories. When asked about learning theories, all three developers in this group were able to articulate and define them. All three concurred with statements like this: "If they [faculty] were ever to stop me, you know what's the theory or who is the theorists behind it, I can actually say this is based on the work by Bruno, this is based by

Pavlov, so that if they want to learn more about they can actually do that." (Debbie) In fact, they all mentioned the theories they espoused, before me asking specifically about learning theories. When asked about their understanding of learning theories, one of them noted,

> I am glad you ask that too because educational developers tend to confuse learning theories with epistemologies and they use the word epistemology to describe any sort of speculation about learning. I guess I would distinguish it this way: an epistemology and epistemological theory are theories about what knowledge and belief are and a learning theory would be a theory about how those things are acquired. So one focuses on you can say the ontology, or what it is to be knowledgeable, what it is to believe. The other focuses on how that ontology comes to be, in your mind, how that state of being comes to be in your mind. They are closely connected but not necessarily the same. (Philip)

They had investigated and critically analyzed a variety of learning theories and how each of them impacted their practice. They noted that they constantly and thoughtfully test theories in their lives to look at the logic and if it meets certain standards, a claim supported by their statements, including,

> If I'm studying an epistemological theory I'm testing it in my life and seeing how it works in my life. I am trying to make sense of what's going on and so forth. That practical application of it helps me determine whether or not I can accept it in the end. (Philip)

Developers in this group were interested in investigating how beliefs, intentions, and actions in the TPI relate to each other and they have consciously thought about changes in their TPI scores through the years and what has caused those changes – a claim supported by their statements in the follow-up interviews such as,

> I have done it many times, the TPI, and I'm happy to see that there is a fair amount of consistency in the results for developmental… I think it's because I'm a fairly systematic

> person and I didn't used to be. So I have become more systematic in the way I approach my own work, in the way I approach helping other people with their teaching. I have become a lot more involved in curriculum, which is a more systematic process, helping people with the pedagogical matters in the classroom, tensions and so forth. (Philip)

Similarly, Manuel tried to investigate and explain changes in his TPI scores, "I don't remember having things in the 40s usually, like the nurturing is 43. I don't recall having things beyond 39…I have been thinking about it all night. This is really unusual…and I have two theories about this." Their statements during the interviews suggest that the TPI helps them to "expand their own repertoire" and see it as a useful tool for professional development,

> I really do think that these aren't to slot people into things and they aren't the only paradigms, right? But I find it interesting to use any of these, including learning styles, even though I don't believe in learning styles, I believe that it is important to investigate that stuff for yourself, see whether you are more comfortable in this quadrant or another quadrant but then see watch yourself right in a reflective kind of way as you do your learning and try and work your way all through these teaching perspectives because that's growth. (Manuel)

According to Debbie, people don't have to fall in the five TPI categories, but they need to be intentional in their work and recognize that people learn differently and how we approach learning is different – otherwise "you run the risk of working with people in your own comfort." The developers in this category also use the TPI in their workshops and often ask their audience to think about the learning theories that are behind each of the perspectives or compare this inventory to others. When asked about the Teaching Perspectives Inventory, Philip mentioned that he asks his audience to reflect on it, but also on other inventories that would help them achieve an understanding of learning theories. As Philip noted,

> We get them to relate it to some other inventories that are out there to get them to reflect on some connections of commonalities and differences. So for instance we use one Zinn philosophy of education and that gives categories like liberal education and behaviourism, things like that and there are some commonalities between the categories there and the categories here but the emphasis is different and the way that they have broken things down is different…

All three developers identified with the far end of the spectrum – having their learning theories clearly defined and consciously using them, a claim supported by statements such as, "I can easily dig out what parts of what theories I am using." (Manuel) Although, they sometimes don't label the theories they are using to the audience they are more on the side of systematized and structured and thoughtful use of the theory, not just having it implicit. All three had a clear foundation on learning theories, and the theorists behind them, further suggesting their association with the far end of the spectrum. This claim is supported by their answers, including,

> [My learning theories] are very clearly defined. They are what I would call camps. I think we talked about it last time but you know from behaviourism there are different strands that come out of that, same thing with cognitivism…So I look at it more as camps of thought as opposed to... I like Pavlov and Skinner, are both behaviourist but took different approaches and Vygostsky and Bruner same camp but different thought processes but they are all extensions of each other although; they would probably disagree with that if they were still alive. (Debbie)

This group of developers was also very thoughtful and able to explain how their learning theories have changed through the years. One of them related her change in learning theories to the work of Kember noting,

> The way that he looks at how people teach at the entry level, they are really content driven, and then at the higher level it goes to the idea of the learner. I think that's how I evolved, the more I learned the more I changed. Instead of being entrenched in a particular theory, it was more an appreciation of how theory intersected with practice. (Debbie)

The two other developers, while applying the theories they espoused, encountered cognitive dissonance and "couldn't make sense of, for instance, why that person believes X using this theory, and it's not working" (Philip), and hence needed to revise their theories. As Philip further noted,

> I have started out as pretty hard core traditional foundationalist. Over time I began to see that that couldn't work and that I needed a theory and also a representational model that took into account the complexity of connections between foundationalist and the rest of the web… I want to try and understand other people so I will apply the theories to other people and myself. And see well if this is what knowledge is and this person seems to know that but I'm not seeing how that can be explained by classical foundationalism. So there were problems, over time…

Developers in this group indicated that the artifacts they produced were based on certain learning theories. Even though they didn't always label the theory in the artifacts, from the document analysis I could infer the learning theories that they were based on. When discussing her artifacts, Debbie noted that one of the documents she sent, focusing on graduate supervision, is about challenging assumptions and is developed based on critical theory. Debbie explained in the interviews that for both artifacts, which were summaries of workshop sessions, she used a number of theories intentionally. She further elaborated,

> We did a formal constructional defined process for each of them which uses a different number of theories across, again because of how I plan things they are always intentional…So that one is more about the content and how people operate within the actual level but then within the different learning objects are opportunities for engagement, there is both cognitivism and constructivism. (Debbie)

From the thematic analysis of Philip's artifacts, it was clear that he consciously uses learning theories. In one of the artifacts that he sent, he co-wrote,

> Scholarly teachers must *relate and explain the evidence they gather using well-reasoned theory and philosophical understanding* (italics in original). This is frequently done unconsciously, haphazardly, poorly. But the scholarly teacher does it deliberately, carefully reasoning out the relationships between phenomena, creating meaning from the information available, making connections between this set of information and information in other realms, trying to tease out mechanisms that could explain why things work the way they do – in all cases building on the work of others. It is through effective theorizing that evidence can be used to inform development and predict likely results of application to practice. Furthermore, underlying each concept used in evidence and theory are a host of philosophical assumptions that impact effective practice, that shape approaches, direct implications, and specify relationships. These philosophical underpinnings must be surfaced, examined, critiqued, and changed when necessary.

I have presented features of developer's implicit and conscious uses of learning theories in table form (Table 7.1) to aid the reader in navigating the characteristics of these two groups. The table reports on the goals of each of the two groups, how they view theories, the variables that they focus on, and the process of inquiry they follow in their practice.

Table 7.1: Features of Developer's Uses of Learning Theories

	Implicit	**Conscious**
Goal	Make a desired or interesting outcome occur or reoccur	Understand relations among causes and effects
Theories	Translating them into their own words	Appreciate how theories intersect with practice
Variables	Focus only on those that are believed to cause the desired outcome	Investigate and test all
Process of inquiry	Focusing on what works and comparing highly contrastive instances	Examine each potentially important variable

Implicit/Conscious

It was apparent from the data analysis that one educational developer had some characteristics common to both of the above groups. Claire considered a range of factors in her everyday practice, including learning theories, with the ultimate goal of producing a desired outcome. She states that,

> Every time I set something up is easy, what's its aim, why am I doing this, what's the agenda, what are the learning objectives and always as basic as it seems always having that by the end of this seminar, participants will be able to…If you design an appropriate process, they will get to the answer you want them to…

However, she has thoughtfully reflected about her practice and the various factors that impact her work stating, "I would like to think about why I am doing what I'm doing which is one of the reasons why I started the blog." She was also the one who initiated the conversation on learning theories and mentioned which one she aspires to use more in her work. When elaborating on the structure of one of her recent workshops, she noted, "Then we will talk a little bit about constructivism, what is constructivism, where do the theories come from, here is a couple of

papers that you might want to see, [and] that one is one of the fundamental core philosophies that I think I bring." On the other hand, when asked about her understanding of learning theories she also made claims that fit the implicit description including,

> Oh you know I wanted to ask you what that was. I don't think about learning theories, [as] proven theorem so to speak, in higher education. I kind of think of scholarship more broadly, so what is the scholarship that guides my practice.

She thought of a collage of factors that help her achieve a certain outcome. When discussing learning theories, she stated that if people with degrees in higher education are interested in investigating and exploring learning theories, they can easily do so. Even though she would like to consciously use learning theories and know who the theorists are, to her "it's like coming in with a new language" and she lacks the confidence to predict based solely on learning theories. In terms of applying learning theories, she indicated that she felt she had to translate that knowledge and "make it her own" so that it is concise and practical. She stated that she is "always looking for ways to make the complex theoretical ideas and the abstract ideas practical and relevant." To explain critical reflection in one of her workshops she provided a cycle of 4 steps that related quite closely to Kolb's theory of experiential learning. She further elaborated with an example; when she was asked to give a workshop on critical reflection she mentioned that her goal was to get the learners to investigate "why they follow the beliefs that they do and how those can inform their future practice…without necessarily bringing Mezirow's words into the conversation." Yet, she indicated the importance of examining each of those steps – and noted that "as much as it is about breaking things down into manageable steps it is also about testing those steps and you know it goes back to the philosophy of science, doesn't it." Claire agreed to having been preoccupied initially with producing a desired outcome; however, now she

seemed to have become more thoughtful on how to use learning theories in her practice and she consciously thinks about them in her blog. She added that,

> I think in the beginning when I started and it was a bit of a crash course in education, like you need to do workshops, you need to do these topics just do them. So it was a matter of scrambling things together and putting a few pieces here and then backing up to make the connection of why we do what we do.

Although she didn't have the confidence to further investigate her own learning theories, she had discussions with her colleagues as to which learning theories they aspire to and why, and realized that even though "[they] all took a similar approach, [the approach] was based on different theories that [they] were bringing in." This would, in my view, provide evidence of her concerted effort to achieve comprehensiveness with regard to learning theories.

When discussing the spectrum, Claire identified with the implicit position; however, she also stated that "reflective" must be added as well; even though she might have her learning theories merged with other factors, she always reflects on every experience and how learning theories cause a particular outcome. She gave the example of faculty members calling her for a consultation, noting that when they,

> come in the office in an hour with a new problem that you haven't dealt with, then you might be very implicit and following what you do consciously but it is only after the fact that you then reflect upon what you've done then if you were in another situation you would be able to become more conscious about it…what you did might align quite implicitly with some learning theories but you weren't aware of it, then you reflect and that becomes more conscious in future applications. I am more like that…

The reflective piece is really important to her practice as it allows her to know more about learning theories and all their assumptions. Claire states that,

> The process of critical reflection helps every learner develop an awareness of their learning progress and why they follow the beliefs that they do and how that can inform their future practice. So it kind of embodies the notion of deep learning and it's one of the most tangible ways to facilitate deep learning.

In both interviews, she kept emphasizing the importance of making her practice more conscious by conducting systematic inquiry to see how theories align with her practice and why they work. She started a blog and initiated discussions with her colleagues with the goal of developing expertise and achieving comprehensiveness in this area. Overall, it was apparent that Claire had qualities from both groups. As much as she focused on producing a desired outcome she was also reflecting on how learning theories impacted that particular outcome.

Summary

This chapter sought to identify how learning theories fit in the developer's practice. The picture painted above suggests that the participants in this study could fit in three categories in terms of their use of learning theories. The implicit users were characterized by: focusing on generating practical outcomes, counting on 'what works', and by their inability to verbalize their knowledge of learning theories. In comparison, conscious use of learning theories occurred among developers who focused on the conditions (means and causes) that bring about a certain result, and were able to clearly articulate and define theories. They valued theory and appreciated how theory intersects with their practice. One practitioner had characteristics common to both groups – identifying with the implicit position, yet trying to better understand how theories impact her work and consciously use them. From the examples detailed above, one can appreciate how different these educational developers are and even though their goals might be the same, they bring different approaches in their practice. In the next chapter, chapter eight,

major factors that have influenced participant developers to be in one of those three categories, are identified.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FACTORS RELATED TO DEVELOPERS USE OF THEORIES

Introduction

This section examines factors that contribute to developer's use of learning theories. After asking a number of questions about developer's understanding of learning theories, the following interview questions were meant to examine factors that influence them to be in one of the categories described in chapter seven. I specifically asked the participants: "What are some factors that influence your use of learning theories (conscious or otherwise)?" This was followed by other questions that included prompts relating to factors "preventing them from focusing on learning theories" and "reasons for identifying with a certain position in the spectrum." They were also asked to provide "examples of considering and incorporating learning theories in their work."

Three main themes emerged around factors contributing to developers being in one of those categories: developer's educational backgrounds, their professional identity, and perceived audience readiness. Because my intention in the study is to focus on the developers' perceptions and use of learning theories, investigating those from the perspective of the participants themselves will enhance our understanding of how learning theories fit into their practice. Hence, I describe what they said in the initial and follow-up interviews according to the three emerging themes. I specifically note when, rather than discussing what developers described, I include my own interpretation that I feel helps in further understanding the impact of learning theories.

Educational Background

Wenger (1998) has argued, using knowledge duality theory, that deep, meaningful learning may be enhanced when there are relatively close, reciprocal, associations between phenomena of

the world (e.g., cells) and a person's representations of them (e.g., drawings). Beyond such example, however, the idea is that deeper learning, with more commitment to it, can arise when learners are more directly involved (self-directed) in both:

- Induction – developing representations: drawing conclusions, general ideas, and the like. For example, developing learning theories or doing research on learning theories to develop conclusions, for instance, about what may affect learning.
- Deduction – testing representations: using theories (especially their own) or factors affecting learning (from their research) to develop (thinking, discussions) new pedagogical approaches based on their research and then making predictions about what they will see in real learning contexts. This can involve just finding out that their predictions have some merit on their thinking, discussions can lead to innovative teaching approaches, and their tests of their predictions in real learning contexts may lead to improvements in learning.

When people rely on being told concepts or theories rather than developing and testing them themselves, their involvement in such reciprocal relationships is likely limited. Such an example, would be theories, which are often delivered to people with few opportunities for application in meaningful situations. In general though, people should engage in induction/deduction to transform abstractions found in decontextualized knowledge claims into relevant information. Thus, it can be argued that people's prior exposure to concepts and engagement in inducing and developing prepositions may help them develop deeper, more meaningful conceptions of issues. Individuals' ability to create knowledge (work in the abstract), however, may not be equally distributed among individuals; which appears to be the case with the participants in this study. This process is highly influenced by individuals' preconceptions, knowledge, and skills or what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as forms of cultural capital. The three

developers, who had previous exposure to learning theories, seemed able to easily discover particular abstractions from inquiries. As Wellington (1998) argued, ‘‘. . . practical work is still not a good tool for teaching theory . . . Theories involve abstract ideas which cannot be *physically* illustrated’’ (p. 7, italics in original). The rest of the participants had no prior exposure to learning theories and in the work environment, they were simply given representations (e.g. ideas about learning, theories) rather than testing the learning theories and being engaged in that dialectic relationship. So, they did little in the way of induction or deduction.

The in-depth interviews suggested that the developer’s educational backgrounds were an important factor driving their use of learning theories. More specifically, it was apparent that those developers whose learning theories were implicit came through pathways that included limited to no exposure to learning theories. Participants in this group didn’t feel confident to consciously use learning theories as they hadn’t come through a path that included theories and hence suffered from the ‘imposter syndrome’ (Clance & Imes, 1978). They emphasized the need to get ‘up to speed’ given their lack of a formal background in learning theories. There were numerous indications that these individuals had some vague notions of learning theories – primarily induced from experiences with teaching and learning rather than being based on their exposure to them during their educational backgrounds. A good example of this is Michelle’s statement,

> I have to engage in a lot of catch-up in this job because my background is not education. I don’t feel like there is a deficiency necessarily there, it hasn’t affected my confidence in doing my job but I understand that I do not know a lot about theories of education and that is a myriad that I have to work on consciously and actively to develop. I have an understanding of learning that I have internalized in my own experience and in working with others.

Similarly, Anne admitted to not being comfortable assisting faculty who want to explore how student learning theories have changed or to understand those better; she would instead refer them to people who would have that knowledge. Julia expressed a concern for not being exposed to learning theories during her educational background and afraid that she has unexamined underlying assumptions that might not always connect with the theories. She stated regarding learning theories,

> I would love to know more about them. I worry because I know there are a lot more out there that I don't know because I didn't come up through philosophy and working with [this person] who comes from philosophy. [The more I work with] people from different disciplines, [the more it] raises the philosophies, the approaches and the models that I am not always familiar with. I love that but it makes me very aware there is more out there and that perhaps either I have underlying assumptions that I am not even realizing…I realize … there are approaches that faculty have that I don't understand, and if I understand those I can better work with them.

They all noted that educational developers today make up a diverse community of practitioners and their different educational backgrounds are mostly due to the lack of a formalized career path to enter the field. Many of the developers in this category indicated that they "had to get up to speed with the higher education literature." (Anne) The getting up to speed usually involves talking to colleagues, tracking down helpful resources, and then having to digest it all by understanding, integrating and synthesizing it. All interviewees came from different educational backgrounds and when asked why their learning theories were implicit, they responded with claims similar to, "To be perfectly honest, that's not an area where I necessarily had particular training…it sounds terrible, but you know, kind of something that you learn on the job." (Naomi)

This group of developers mentioned several times that educational development was not their natural home and learning theories was not an area that they necessarily studied in their prior disciplines. Michelle claimed that her learning theories were "somewhat internalized" since she "had never formally studied them, so what [she] has grasped about learning theories has been through [her] own experience by watching other people teach and seeing things that resonated with [her]." Many of them mentioned that they were "learning on the go" since they came from a disciplinary background that didn't teach or provide developers with opportunities to focus on learning theories. Similar to what Wenger argues, this group of people is being delivered abstractions with few opportunities for application in meaningful situations. Part of the reason that their theories are implicit is that they are continually trying to clarify and develop an understanding of them. When asked about particular learning theories one of them noted, "To be fair if I knew more about these I might feel differently but these are the ones that I know." (Naomi) She further elaborated,

> again I'm coming not having a background in education…and for people who have degrees in higher education it's nothing to them to associate with certain authors and theories, but to me obviously it's like coming in with a new language. (Naomi)

Those who haven't had that formal training on learning theories have had to study them in their own time, through their own experience. They don't feel comfortable and don't have the confidence in using the names of the learning theories or giving advice on learning theories. When they give advice, they don't want to pretend to know the labels and sound "artificial." When Michelle summarized her role, she noted,

> It is incumbent upon us to point those people in the right direction, to identify resources for them but do we tell them what theories they should be looking at, depends. I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that, to be honest. I would refer them to someone else or I would

> try to identify resources, and in the resources that would direct them to what area of research they might want to pursue further…

Developers do not want to recommend practices and theories they cannot back up and they all mentioned the need to 'talk the talk as well as walk the walk.' As one of them noted,

> …when it comes down to it I don't want to be hypocritical. I prefer, I am happier when I have a consistency between my beliefs and I can explain or define inconsistencies so I'm happier when things are consistent but I can't say that's always the case. (Julia)

When she was asked about her implicit use of learning theories she stated, "The kind of psychology I came through wasn't heavy in learning theories, was heavy in physiological psychology and was research based…so some of it is lack of knowledge." Similarly, Michelle acknowledged that she didn't have a background in education and in her office it was really the people who had that background who were involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning. As to her, "I don't really know anything about teaching and learning", she stated.

Claire had similar characteristics to the group explained above. Even though she is in the implicit/conscious category, she came from a science background with no exposure to learning theories. When asked about particular learning theories, she stated that part of the reason for not consciously using them is lacking a background in learning theories. "It's just because I don't have that background. I'm sure if I took a course or consciously sort of pursued that, it would consciously inform what I do so part of it is just not having that formal background." (Claire) She did, however, add that as a scientist she is used to backing up everything she says with research and she has had to explore for herself different learning theories "for example, constructivism, what is constructivism, where do the theories come from…" Although her formal education did not include theories, she has had to seek them out to give herself confidence in her work,

> I have found that for me that is a way to develop confidence in my own understanding of what I'm doing but also to help others develop confidence in what we are preaching so to speak. I find that being in this academic culture it is best to back up what we are saying and I find that it enhances our reputation, in the academic community. I am not sounding trite when I say that that I need to do. And part of it it's selfish, that I need to be confident in my own practice. A lot of this has come because I don't have a degree from OISE right. I don't have a background in education. So I have had to really seek knowledge from a lot of credible sources in order to have confidence in what I am saying and doing in this role.

Meanwhile, of the 11 developers studied, Philip, Debbie, and Manuel indicated they have had continuous exposure to learning theories throughout their educational background. Even though all three had varied educational backgrounds, they seemed to have incorporated learning theories in their prior disciplines. They investigate and critically modify their theories of learning, and constantly develop ideas on how to use theories to improve their practice. These developers have seen the added value of investigating theories, as Debbie noted, "because I teach adult ed I am sort of in a better position than others, having taught the course but also done the research I know what makes [the learners] tick." They have the background knowledge to continuously examine learning theories and critically analyze the extent to which they are consistent and logical. They feel comfortable with the different learning theories since they have formally studied them. Debbie explained that she had to take numerous courses on learning theories at the university she went to and thus she has a core background that is very much engraved in learning theories. She further elaborated on her opportunities to apply the theories during her studies, suggesting a comprehensive and long-term exposure to learning theories,

> Again I was so spoiled; in my second year when I was in [that] university we actually had a course where we did all these experiments so I had my own rat. And we did Skinner's

> experiment, and then we did another experiment with the lie detector. So all the famous experiments at the time, we actually did them all. We actually had the equipment and we ran them. I got to see all these theories work close in behaviour… So I actually had right from second year a clear foundation on learning theories. And then my third year which is where I would say has shaped my [approach to learning theories]. I had an amazing professor who came to class as a different theorist. He didn't dress differently but one week he was Bruner, one week he was Pavlov, so each week he taught the class how these people would have taught. We got introduced to different theorists, from their perspectives, about the importance of their theory. (Debbie)

Similarly, Philip, and Manuel have had good foundational grounding in theories throughout their formal education. Manuel linked his educational background with his interest in further investigating learning theories. He stated:

> I think by studying philosophy, critical theory, and thinking about it in teaching development language, I think I have been thinking about national geographic kinds of theoretical constructs like the British and Australian models rely heavily on phenomenography as a kind of paradigm of research, North America just doesn't. So I'm really interested in that how theories get developed out certain kinds of research predilections like there is kind of horizon of intelligibility, to use a hermeneutical term, beyond which people can't really think or see because they are within that circle.

When Philip started mentioning factors influencing his practice, he really focused on his disciplinary background adding that "my background in philosophy has a big impact on how I approach my work maybe because I was completely brainwashed by philosophers." He further elaborated that throughout his degrees he has been interested in how people acquire knowledge and the difference between knowledge and beliefs. He expressed his frustration when he noted

that to people in teaching and learning, theories and epistemology could mean "anything that comes to mind. Epistemology has a 25 hundred-year history and it is an active area of research and has been for centuries. You can't just learn it to be anything you want." Philip claimed to have tried to apply the same standards he has learned in his discipline when examining and testing learning theories. When asked about how he incorporated learning theories in his practice, he emphasized the importance of not recommending practices that he doesn't have good reasons for believing are effective,

> I draw on what I read in the education literature, but I guess for the most part is driven by studying epistemology, which I have dealt a lot with. My honour's thesis and my original dissertation topic were on the ethics, what our moral responsibilities are when it comes to what we believe in and why we believe that…I try not to give any recommendations that I could not back up. I try not to recommend practices that I don't have good reasons for believing are effective. I try to ensure that nothing has been said that is shady or untrustworthy…

Moreover, all three are currently engaged in theoretical work and they appreciate and value the theories that inform their work. When asked about her instructional goals, Debbie noted that she thoughtfully applies theories to her work as they provide an essential infrastructure for her everyday thinking and practice. For example, in her research, she finds it important to identify and be conscious of her learning theories as she notes that, "you can study the same question using different theoretical constructs and have very different conclusions for the same questions because of how you analyze the data." She also gave the example of asking the graduate students she supervises about their theoretical premise and indicating that part of her job is to help graduate students "explore what theory really fits what they are trying to do"; hence, providing further evidence of Debbie's engagement in theoretical work. Similar to Debbie and

Manuel, Philip's practice involved him being engaged in theoretical work and constantly examining theories. In examining the artifacts that he sent and discussing them in the interviews, it was evident that he had designed them through the application of a variety of theories. He mentioned that one of the books that he is writing is focused on how theories and moral norms make sense.

All three recognized that their ability to deliberately use learning theories is mainly a result of theories being part of their area of research and from studying theories in their prior disciplines. They also acknowledged that their colleagues span disciplines all over the board and thus might not necessarily have the same appreciation of learning theories – a claim supported by them in interviews, including,

> If I come to educational development through another degree path … the same with that person that has read a whole body of literature in chemistry or math, or business doesn't necessarily mean that they will find value in that research because it's not something that they necessarily have been exposed to. I have had continuous long term exposure therefore I see the relevance. (Debbie)

They seemed to appreciate how theory intersected with practice and expressed their "fascination" with learning theory as theories helped them pursue causal explanations and make predictions. As Manuel noted, "because I am fascinated by the boundaries and shapes of theories and stuff I think I probably want to understand all those things and think about that more than a lot of people." Debbie concurred, stating, "I teach theory and I love theory." Double loop learning requires that individuals investigate and apply their learning theories, and it was evident that these three developers have had these opportunities.

Professional Identity

A recurring theme in the educational development literature is that most academic developers come from other disciplinary backgrounds (Fraser, 1999) and bring with them a set of skills, values, and knowledge. As Harland and Staniforth (2003) reflect on their experiences as academic developers, one of the three principles that they identify that is central to their work is their professional identity. They state that, "As 'regular academics', neither of us recalls being concerned about 'identity' until we started out careers in academic development" (p. 26). The lack of a 'discipline' might be a barrier for educational developers to create their identity, considering that "there is no more stunning fact about the academic professional anywhere in the world than the simple one that academics are possessed by disciplines" (Clark, 1987b, p. 25). Andresen (1996) discussed the following three ways in dealing with that problem: (i) invoke the 'discipline' of the developer's prior degree,

> and sustain that identity by continuing to work at least in part, within it (ii) claim to be somehow heroically 'transdisciplinary' (e.g., CERI, 1972, p. 26); or (iii) work to create and inhabit a subdiscipline of 'Higher Education Studies'– presumably under the umbrella of 'Education Studies' (see, for example, Barnett, 1994a, 1994b, 1995). (p. 44)

Manathunga (2007) describes the identities of developers as "unhomely" since "they are often disciplinary migrants, performing hybrid, liminal roles at the "fault lines" between teachers and learners, between academics and managers, and between teaching and research" (p. 25). The author applies Bhabha's (1994) concept of "unhomeliness" to refer to what developers experience when they migrate from other disciplines as they continuously "re-create' themselves. He further argues that this feeling of unhomeliness is experienced to different extents by developers, whereby those already from the education discipline are quite unlikely to experience

it, while it most affects "those coming from critical or post-modernist theoretical positions" (p. 28). This seemed to be the case with the participants in this study.

From the three developers who indicated conscious use of learning theories, only Debbie – who was already in the education discipline – didn't experience the feeling of unhomeliness. She always felt she belonged in the field of educational development as she had plenty of opportunities to apply the various theories she was taught. Debbie considers herself a "pure" or "an anomaly" in the profession since she has had all her formal schooling in psychology and education, which is not the norm in the development field. Educational development has always been her professional identity and she further elaborates by noting that, "this is my area of research, it is the area I study, this is what I do; therefore, I see complete relevance."

Contrary to Debbie, the other two (Philip and Manuel) mourned the absence of theory and quickly experienced the feeling of not belonging. One of the reasons of experiencing this feeling is that developers, having migrated in the world of educational development from other disciplines (Webb, 1992; Fraser, 1999; Rowland, 2003), "bring with them professional and personal identities profoundly shaped by their disciplinary discourse…[and] values about the academic work, the role of theory, and what constitutes valid evidence" (p. 27). Both developers expressed the need to stay in touch with their prior discipline. Like Hooks (1994, p. 59), they have found theory to be a "location for healing." For Manuel, the work that he does as an educational developer seems to intersect well conceptually with the theories he has learned in his degrees. He claimed that he gets a lot of good energy from acting as a facilitator and helping people but it's also exciting intellectually for him to know that it is possible in this career to still maintain ties to his prior discipline. He acknowledged that being engaged in theoretical work "has been a way for [him] to feel at home" in this new field, – educational development – by noting that,

> At first when I was in the field of teaching development I didn't see the connection so well and I had resigned myself to a job as a staff member for the rest of my life not really having an intellectual life about it. So for the first 5, 4 or 5 years of my joining the field I felt out of place. I didn't feel like I had citizenship in the field you know in the country of teaching development. I felt like I was a foreigner, an interloper. So I thought I was just plugging myself into a teaching machine or a university machine that was helping others do their job and I thought about a helper job. I have a helper job. So you know there was always this part of me on the back of my head that was like oh but I wish I could still do critical theory… That's when I starting feeling more like myself that was trained the critical way, and myself that was the helper guy, started coming together…

Before that, he labelled the field as being very "instrumental and applied"; not really concerned with constructs and theories but with helping faculty with strategies and techniques that they will use in the classroom, further noting, "I am not sure that has changed at all over time but I just felt better." Similarly, Debbie acknowledged that there has been a practical rather than theoretical emphasis in the past stating, "we have traditionally given workshops on how to's and different aspects; we are going to be starting to offer workshops on cognitive learning theory…we can't assume that faculty know a) what metacognition is, and b) how to teach it or enable it to happen…"

Philip, as well, invokes the 'discipline' of his prior degree and sustains that identity by continuing to work at it, at least in part. One of the artifacts he discussed during the interview was a poster developed from research that was originally connected to his dissertation. Just like Manuel, he too tried to keep his identity by connecting his work in the educational development work to what he was doing prior to entering this field. However, Philip explained that for him

staying connected with learning theories, a bigger factor than the feeling of belonging, has been raising the standards in the educational development field. It is important to have higher standards as educational developers and that only comes by theorizing the field and integrating the practical aspect with the theoretical one. According to Philip, developers need to ensure that nothing has been said that is "shady or untrustworthy" and that's why they must reflect on their practice and investigate the various factors that impact their work – noting that,

> Higher education is important enough that we should have higher standards. If we were talking about something like, I don't know, Plato's relationship, nobody cares honestly except for the scholars who read that, and I read that but I realize that nobody cares. It's not terribly important, so whether we get it right or wrong, isn't going to affect anything to an immense degree. But when it comes to actually helping people learn, preparing people for their lives, preparing people for their careers, Brookfield would like me to say engage citizens, something like that, it actually does matter whether we are doing it well or not and that means we need higher standards for the information we are using to guide our decisions. Our standards in the profession as educational developers but also as teachers generally in higher education are shamefully low…

Going back to one of the ways that Andreson described in dealing with issues of identity – invoke the 'discipline' of the developer's prior degree and sustain that identity by continuing to work at least in part, within it – Manuel and Philip are indeed keeping the connections with their prior disciplines. For Debbie, education has always been her discipline and she always felt connected with her learning theories and able to apply them. Meanwhile, those developers who were implicit about learning theories tended to see educational development as a sub-discipline of 'Higher Education Studies' and worked to inhabit that; the feeling of unhomeliness didn't seem to affect them.

Claire also didn't seem to be preoccupied with the feeling of not-belonging as educational development had become her identity. She explained that one of the artifacts she sent was her attempt to practice what she preaches, and engage in teaching and learning research by presenting at a scholarly conference and following up with a paper. The reason she included that artifact was,

> To show that, coming from a scientific background, I have publications obviously in my discipline but publishing in educational research and publishing in education it's a different experience… so here is a low stake paper I can kind of get my feet wet and then get more confidence in starting to write in higher education.

She belonged to the third category described by Andresen (1996) where she had a tendency to see educational development as a subdiscipline of 'Higher Education Studies' and worked to inhabit that identity.

Perceived Audience Readiness

All developers in my sample mentioned the audience as one of the most important factors influencing their practice and emphasized that "educational development is a developing office and so is other-oriented." However, almost all developers who indicated implicit use of learning theories claimed that learning theories do not resonate with the audience and there would be consequences if developers introduced them to faculty. As Michelle noted,

> It would reflect poorly on the office, too, because a person went there for this and they go on about well have you thought about your own personal development, let's look at it at a progressive path for you because you know give me what I want…What they need is what they came in for and they will be satisfied with that. On the other hand if they go in and someone starts to talk about learning theories they could alienate them so they could actually get in the way.

They broadly agreed that faculty wear these 'cloaks of competence' and suffer from the imposter syndrome as they are experts in the field but not in teaching, noting that "sometimes faculty feel like they have to fake it as if they are experts in teaching when they know they are not." As Michelle further elaborated,

> Faculty members will often feel that people will find out that they are actually incompetent, that they don't know what they're teaching, yes they have this experience, as they have done all these things but damn it they are going to find out that I really don't know what I am doing.

They acknowledged that one of the reasons to implicitly use learning theories is so they don't scare faculty with theories. These developers want to send a message to faculty that they are not incompetent and they feel it is necessary to take things in 'baby steps' with academics.

Broadly, these developers claimed having an implicit use of theories has been satisfactory as their knowledge of learning theories has not been called upon. The reason being is that their audience is neither ready nor interested in knowing about learning theories – a statement supported by comments made by them in interviews including "[faculty] are not there to learn about teaching and learning theories. They are there to become more effective teachers." (Michelle) Similarly, Patricia noted that based on her past experiences in designing workshops "adult learning theory is a killer, is the last place you want to start a workshop with, as nobody goes to a workshop that is titled 'change the way you think about teaching'." She further elaborated that their immediate clientele "don't come here to learn about theory…that's not what people want; they want to know how to teach which they think of as a very practical, tactile thing, techniques." They broadly believe that the audience will not understand the theoretical models and the explicit use of learning theories would be a 'turn-off' for faculty; "it is affirming your worst stereotypes." (Patricia) They all made claims suggesting that instead of articulating

learning theories, developers need to focus on offering to faculty what they will find doable and practical in order to give them a feeling that they can do it. Participants in this category indicated that theories have to be brought in as appropriate and when people have the ears to hear them as it all "goes back to what these people want to hear and what would they want to go away with." (Patricia) She further claimed that she doesn't want to come across to faculty as "lost in this abstract area of stuff" which according to the developers I interviewed is easy to do if you present faculty with learning theories. They mentioned that workshop participants regularly let them know that they have given up their valuable time to come along, so they feel pressured to make the workshop experience worthwhile for them. On a similar note, Jane O'Leary (1997) argued that,

> In a university climate characterized by stringent cost cutting and demands for evidence of efficiency and effectiveness, academic staff developers are facing the challenge of presenting staff development as being relevant and appropriate to academic staff rather than merely a tacked on, time-consuming and superfluous luxury. (p. 77)

In examining the artifacts and interviews of developers who indicated more implicit use of learning theories, I found no instances in which they provided opportunities for their audience to think about or engage in learning theories. Furthermore they feel they are being valued for what they have to offer to the audience and how they operate is within their comfort zone and "being true to themselves"– a claim supported by statements made by them during interviews such as, "I think if I was trying to do something outside that, I would feel artificial and I think people would take on that." (Michelle) Developers in this category seemed to opt for a wider reading of the literature and admitted that theories per se don't drive them. They mentioned key articles and concepts that resonate with them and noted that to them those are more useful than the 'capital T theories.' The main reason being as one of them noted, "Because I think you would

have to be responsive to whom you are working with and what is driving them or how to connect." (Patricia) According to them, an implicit use of learning theories is sufficient as theories make it much harder for academics to make the necessary connections needed to operate in their practice; and talking about theories can easily overwhelm their audience and make developers sound dogmatic. They all concurred that theory "tends to scare people off"– a claim supported by their statements during interviews such as, "[some people] don't know what they want and if we gave them all that theory, I think they wouldn't know what to do with it…I think it would be overwhelming." (Naomi) Also they all emphasized changing little things so that they don't go out of their comfort zone or make their audience uncomfortable – a claim supported by their statements during interviews including, "We need to find an entry point…the entry point would be finding something that is safe for them to try" (Michelle) so that what they introduce to their audience "isn't some theoretical abstract notion that has no connection to real practice." (Michelle) They want their audience to know that they understand the level that they are at and where they are coming from. They all claimed that speaking the faculty's language was important to be successful as a developer as it allowed them to connect with their audience. If developers use words that are foreign to academics they will have trouble having a conversation with them; stating that the jargon turns faculty off and "once they are turned off is very hard to get them back." (Julia) She further added,

> I forget sometimes that to me active learning I have been living and breathing it for 15 years, I forget that for some people they haven't even conceived it. It's so foreign you might as well have said the earth is actually a square. It goes against everything they have ever known, seen, understood, and I forget that occasionally and if you forget it too far the workshop fails because you haven't you, you have never reached the point where the faculty the participants can understand what we are saying…I almost never use the term

> pedagogy because I find most people that's like a blackbox, silvery blackbox is a bit scary so I just say how you teach. So constructivist I don't use that unless they are taking in a course time to build up and deconstruct. I try to be really careful.

Most developers in the implicit category expressed concern that articulating learning theories would make them sound dogmatic and they had to be really careful of appearing to interfere with academic decisions. A good example of this is Naomi's statement that "people are sort of skeptical of non-academic telling faculty how to teach." Even though she had a PhD and worked in a university environment she referred to herself as a non-academic and emphasized that she is quite conscious of this challenge and really believes that her role is not to interfere with decision-making processes in any way. She did acknowledge that she had knowledge and experience to bring in but her job is not to communicate to faculty how to do things. She stated that faculty,

> can find [learning theory] a bit alienating because it feels a little artificial. It feels like something they are going to take wholesale and apply it to their teaching or that it will shape their teaching and any discussions on how faculty might teach and how students learn is done outside the context of formalized or identified theoretical frameworks. (Naomi)

Moreover, these developers acknowledged being valued for the type of expertise and background they bring in and noted that only if they needed to do something different would they have to focus on learning theories. A good example of this is Michelle's statement:

> If I want to start developing different kinds of support for different groups beyond teaching assistants and beyond novice teachers, junior faculty members, I am going to need to expand what I know and I am going to expand what I do. So I am not worried about career advancement at this stage because the office is so dynamic and there is so much going on and I am never bored and I am always challenged so I am kind of happy

> where I am right now, but if I wanted to do anything different, I have to expand that knowledge base.

Furthermore, they see their role as responding to people needs "rather than bringing in particular ideas or initiatives" in their practice. For example, Naomi notes that,

> What I like about my work a lot is that it's very responsive and reactive. I like reacting to people's needs and to the needs of the institution rather than identifying my own priorities and pursuing them, if that makes sense, from a research perspective or from a programming perspective…the reactive part is really important for me rather than the initiation part.

Overall, developers in this group claimed that their audience is not interested to know about learning theories. They expressed concern that focusing on learning theories might alienate their audience and make them sound dogmatic. As, for example, Graham Webb points out, educational developers have had to continuously prove their "essential and immediate practicality: The practical has been valued over (and often defined in opposition to) the theoretical…" (Webb, 1996a, p. 352). This is also consistent with what Graham Badley (2001) noted,

> In effect, educational developers have been employed mainly as practical helpers to university teachers who, despite their own theoretical concerns within their own subject-areas, have shown themselves to be traditionally reluctant to become theoretically interested in the teaching-learning process itself. (p. 169)

Meanwhile, Debbie, Manuel and Philip value and appreciate having a strong foundation of learning theories and seem to be taking on a leadership role. It was clear from their comments and artifacts that they were trying to consciously use learning theories to build some of that knowledge and start leading some of the research in this area. In fact, Debbie had created a

website about the different learning theories for information processing "so that people were aware that there is this thing called theory let's talk about all these different theories, you have to have one come on!" All three of them were organizing workshops around learning theories to raise faculty's awareness and to inform them on all the different theories. Debbie gave several examples of her proactive approach as she noted that,

> … [A recent session] made me realize that in the past we have traditionally given workshops on how to's and different aspects. We are going to be starting to offer workshops on cognitive learning theory because this session we talked about metacognition and how a faculty member has to help students switch strategies. And I have seen in the audience, in fact I asked the question, how many people know about cognitive learning strategies and how to switch…So it will be a workshop on effective influences on teaching and learning in higher ed, social cognitive learning theories and memory because what we have realized again going at the evolution is that we are right at the stage where a lot of the faculty who are committed to the things are ready for that next stage.

They stressed several times that in their practice "the audience is everything" but to them the audience is ready and should know about learning theories and how to apply them to their classrooms. All three of them seemed to believe that by consciously using learning theories, they are taking a leadership role. It is important to teach learning theories even though the audience might find them alienating initially,

> Even me when I teach theory and I love theory I see the glazed eyes, because theory isn't necessarily, it's the practice of theory that is exciting but you have to get to that knowledge base before you get excited for the practice. (Debbie)

Similarly Manuel acknowledged that it is crucial to understand where the audience is coming from and to connect with them. Consciously using his learning theories and being public with them, has helped him in his practice. He sees the "added value" of learning theories and implementing them. He noted,

> I tend to have a lot of respect from faculty members because they think I speak their language. I come across as somebody who understands them and is like them and thinks rather than just delivering teaching centre's messages unthinkably. So the feedback I get is that I talk like them, think like them and I think some of that has to do with the fact that I am a bit public with my critical theory background…

They need to quickly develop a relationship with their clients based on common understandings, but also acknowledge that once faculty recognize that developers are 'like them', the quality of their interactions usually changes for the better (see Mintz, 1997). Consistent with his belief on taking a leadership approach to his practice, one of Manuel's artifacts was on how teaching and learning centres need to take some position and agency and be a leader instead of only reacting to people's needs. He states that "we feel pressured to be neutral in North America" when perhaps they would be better off if they take a stance on issues concerning teaching and learning. Manuel believes that the field of educational development is "shallow theoretically" and to him the desire to feel competent and expert enough when it comes to learning theories stems not only from the fact that theories "tap into some former things from [his] own discipline that seems to fit this new work" but also from "trying to build up something that [he] thinks is absent." He is part of a writing group where people get ideas from the different disciplines they are in and apply them to educational development, trying to theorize the field from perspectives that seem to be missing, "I might say ok here we have been learning some stuff about Bloom's taxonomy cognitive

domain, there is a revised version of that and I might explain metacognition." Philip, as well, is proactive in his role as an educational developer and states that,

> Partly my work was really informed by a strong desire to sort of shake other educational developers; certain things have become sort of folklore, have become part of the bedrock of assumptions of things we take for granted in educational development and we are not thinking carefully about some of the ideas and practices that we are recommending.

When it comes to his audience, he introduces and explains to them the arguments that are embedded in the learning theories; however, he does emphasize that he has to make the learning theories appealing for them as providing the logic and evidence isn't enough:

> I would try to make it sensible for the person, understandable for the person and I would try and make it persuasive so there is always that element of manipulation because it's not all about providing the logic and the evidence because people you know we are not terribly convinced by logic and evidence. You try to make it more persuasive so often we find that you have to combine the reasoning and the more honesty based approaches that I hope people will want to use in their work with propaganda and rhetoric so that they will actually pay attention to the logic and the evidence… I think the propaganda and the rhetoric is only a problem when you are using it in the absence of having compelling reasons for having that.

Overall these three developers claimed that a conscious use of learning theories helped them take a more proactive role in their practice. They were constantly trying to build the necessary knowledge base and educate their audience on learning theories.

Other Factors that May Influence Developer's Work

In this section, I describe other factors that may impact developer's work. Early in the initial interview, I asked them general exploratory questions about their practice, what they liked about it, and their goals and strategies that they use to achieve those goals. During the follow-up interviews before discussing learning theories, I asked them "What factors in general influence your work?" and used prompts from the initial interviews, as needed. Developers discussed factors that impacted their work and while each story was unique, there were two main themes that emerged. Across developers the two consistent themes were: the collective practice of educational developers, and emotional needs of the audience.

The collective practice of educational developers. The positive impact of collaboration and collegiality, in all kinds of learning endeavours and teaching practices, has been well established in the literature (see Bruffee, 1999; Saltiel, Sgroi & Brockett, 1998; Waghid, 1998). There are several definitions of collegiality, but in this context it is understood as "power shared equally between colleagues" (Bloomsbury, 1999). When describing faculty developers, Lewis (2010) emphasized the collaborative aspect of their practice noting that, "This openness and collegiality are hallmarks of the profession such that it is not unusual for first-time conference attendees to feel welcomed and amazed at this sharing, helpful atmosphere" (p. 20). On a similar note, Darling-Hammond et al., (2001) suggest that "much learning occurs in groups and among individuals engaged in tasks together" (p. 14). The role of the academic developer "requires a collegial posture in the way academic expertise is applied to help others solve problems on their own terms" (Tayler, 2005, p. 37). Lave and Wenger (1991) apply the notion of 'social learning' and their concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' to shed further light in understanding collegiality. They argue that the academic department is a highly significant site of faculty

learning, as it is where the principal loyalties and sense of identity of faculty are rooted (Henkel, 2000; Becher & Trowler, 2001).

According to social constructivists, "the process of sharing individual perspectives – called *collaborative elaboration* (Van Meter & Stevens, 2000) – results in learners constructing understanding together that wouldn't be possible alone" (Greeno, Collins & Resnick, 1996). Moreover, since most institutions are constellations of communities (Knight & Trowler, 2001), supporting and bringing together socially distributed learning through 'mutual engagement', and a 'shared repertoire of resources' (Wenger, 1998), becomes much more important.

In many occasions throughout both interviews, developers referred to their work as collective. They seemed to believe that it is not individual knowledge and skill that is important but knowledge and skills that are available to them at a collective level. Participants highlighted the importance of having a supportive community to share values, ideas and learn from one another both at the local level of their centre and more broadly with their peers nationally and internationally. Developers with different expertise co-participate, each in their own ways, as integral and constitutive part of the collective, in resolving complex problems. Those with an implicit use of learning theories didn't seem to find it necessary for all individuals working at the centre to know about learning theories due to the collective nature of their work. As one of them stated, "[our work] is collegial, they bring certain information and I bring certain information and hopefully the sum is greater than the parts." The participants in this study seemed to appreciate that they all come from different disciplines and bring different perspectives as they participate collectively in achieving common goals – a claim supported by statements such as,

> I think what's really important in an office like this is that you have a range of people with a range of different perspectives and expertise. And that's one of the things that I

> like about this work is being able to draw on that sort of collective expertise rather than bringing everything to the table myself. (Naomi)

They all discussed the collective aspect of their practice and learning from others, and with others, as engaging in collaborative work invigorates their profession. All participants confirmed that they benefited from sharing experiences and ideas with each other, from reflecting on and solving problems together, and from establishing working groups with their colleagues. All developers emphasized that the team they work with and the interactions they have are an important factor in their practice. They find that their peers and their different personalities, backgrounds, and disciplines give developers different kinds of valuable feedback. As one of them stated,

> The people that I work with are a real factor, I mean there are certain things that I just know I can trust or let them do it or I can just relax and do my part and they can do their part. So the team that I work with is a big factor and the different kinds of personalities that they have, different kinds of backgrounds that they have, discipline backgrounds so that I know they give me different kinds of feedback. (Julia)

Coming in the field with such diverse backgrounds, they see it as an advantage, not a shortcoming, to the profession – as they think the answers to a lot of questions and issues in education need to come in dialogue and exchange. Claire noted, "I was very fortunate here to have a collective community and I say that in a very enduring and humanistic way." Similarly, Julia stated, "I didn't come up through philosophy and working with [this person] who comes from philosophy more with people from different disciplines raises the philosophies, the approaches and the models that I am not always familiar with. I love that…" Anne also mentioned on counting on other people to get informed:

> I went to places where people were doing this kind of work and so they informed me about some of the processes they used. I asked for resources if they knew good ones. I tracked down resources that I found helpful and then I have to digest it all.

Similarly other developers valued having knowledgeable colleagues and working in a team environment as they can learn a lot from each other.

> So I rely, I actually read the literature that [my colleagues] read. They are very good about sharing articles with me and that has really helped my learning because I don't necessarily know where to go to get this information. (Michelle)

When Michelle discussed her goals and strategies to achieve those goals, again she emphasized the collective work at her centre, noting:

> With all of us together, like I by myself can I do that, absolutely not…It's really the unit together, including the technology support staff because technology is increasingly a part of teaching and learning. So all of us have to work together to achieve that change in attitude, which I think is really important.

Most of them, when discussing their goals and strategies used words such as "we" or "our" to describe those. Some developers consciously noted that they refer to their practice at the collective level.

> I have always felt a very strong partnership with the work of the centre. And I think everything I said and it will always be this way when I talk about our work I would say we, our work, or whatever, because that's really what it's like. There is nothing that I do here that is done alone and not in collaboration and consultation. (Naomi)

Also the artifacts that most developers send, were co-written with their colleagues, and often times when discussing the artifacts, developers referred to the "working group" who helped develop the artifacts.

For many participants their ability to do the job was not impacted by their knowledge or lack of thereof about learning theories, as they counted on the collective expertise at their centres – a claim supported by statements such as,

> For me is my background in understanding the university and the university as an institution and sort of higher education as a field. That's my background but I can see how other people would bring in a different background … [and] different pieces of expertise I guess. So for me what I feel I can contribute in that area is how the university works and what's been tried in other places and how it succeeded and why it hasn't and kind of the structural, the policy mechanisms that can support that but also recognizing that, that's just my particular background and then other people would bring in a varied perspective. And so part of the role is part of that facilitating role is also recognizing what expertise is helpful or necessary to solve this particular problem or to move this particular initiative forward and identifying where that expertise can come from. (Naomi)

Those who appeared explicit about their learning theories also acknowledged benefiting from interactions with their colleagues. They gave several examples of valuing the knowledge, experience and expertise that other people bring to the job – a claim supported by statements such as,

> We learn a lot from each other, we come all over the disciplines and the learning that we can achieve from our interactions. I think it's beneficial not only to our own

> understanding but also to the people that we work with. You learn ok so this is how they do things in geography, so if I'm working with a geographer I know I have dealt with geographers how am I framing this, do those make more sense, and we will use that aspect. (Philip)

Similarly, when Debbie discussed her knowledge and conscious use of learning theories, she emphasized that she equally values the knowledge and experience that her other colleagues bring even though it is not in learning theories. She noted,

> I mean there are different ends as you use in your words different ends of the spectrum [in terms of learning theories] and there is value in both. I would be honest I wouldn't want five people like me in my centre because I have a certain view that having multiple perspectives actually builds a better practice.

They seemed to believe that even the people who claim not to be using a theory, are still informed by theory whether or not they want to investigate it. The developers in this group saw it as their responsibility to educate their colleagues on learning theories and often felt they "have a special responsibility to those people" – stating that,

> I understand why a lot of people are in the first category. I think in some cases it is simply a matter of time; they just don't have the time to do a lot of theoretical learning but so recognizing that they probably have good reasons for that. That means that we have a greater responsibility to them to make sure that whatever theories we are giving them that they don't have to go and investigate them themselves are good theories, that we have good grounds for believing that they actually explain the phenomena that they have to

explain, that they provide the basis to our life, the predictions and generalization… (Philip)

Those whose learning theories were implicit had a tendency to count on their colleagues who were informed and knowledgeable in this area. They noted that their work is mostly collegial and involves teams of people; hence they are expected to bring a different type of knowledge, as there will always be individuals in their team well educated on learning theories. Valuing collegiality and the work of their colleagues was something that was emphasized also amongst those who were explicit with their learning theories. In addition, they felt obligated to provide theories that meet rigorous standards to their co-workers who lack the time to investigate learning theories. Overall, all developers in this study emphasized the collective nature of their work and seemed to rely on the different perspectives and backgrounds that each and every one of them brings to the field of educational development.

Emotional needs of the audience. One of the things that is receiving significant attention in education is acknowledging that we cannot understand professionals' practice if that practice is considered merely from a cognitive stance; feelings and emotions play an essential role. When feelings and emotions are brought into awareness, different conflicts and concerns might arise; these concerns are sometimes a more productive starting point than theories. Faculty who are fearful, anxious, depressed, or distracted cannot focus to process information. Positive emotions – feelings of self-confidence and ability to persevere when faced with difficulties – help faculty to think, perform, reflect and evaluate their own teaching. Consistent with Milton Mayeroff's view of caring as "helping the other grow" (Mayeroff, 1971) – the other being "a person, an ideal, an idea", when we attend to this often neglected aspect of education, we are helping the other grow and progress in some way.

Although attending to the emotional needs of the audience may not directly determine developer's use of learning theories, the data suggest that this factor did influence the participants in particular situations. The study participants saw their role as so inextricably related to the emotions of their audience and argued that responding to this need was essential in their position. Several developers identified their role as that of a "helper" and noted that they mostly attend to the emotional needs of faculty. The developers in my study acknowledged the complexity of the lives of academics and how their learning process is dependent on the identities they create, and is linked to their confidence and self-esteem. When developers were asked about factors influencing their work, most of them mentioned empathy, and attending to the emotional needs of their audience – a claim supported by statements such as,

> Empathy is almost like the biggest one because I really feel for them in whatever career stage they are in. You know some of them come in crisis… I may be in a room and say to myself this group needs more nurturing or this person who is really almost crying needs more self-confidence. (Manuel)

They broadly stated that an important part of their job is help academics feel competent, empowered and give them a sense that they can control what is happening in their life. They mentioned that a lot of teachers tend to shy away from providing some emotional support because they think they are crossing some sort of boundary. However, when you are dealing with human beings, and their emotions, developers believe that they have to take those seriously. Several participants mentioned that affective factors often times influence behaviours and how people react in certain situations. One developer noted how free faculty are of the "destructive elements of sarcasm and other forms of ad hominem humiliation" will depend on how

constructively and objectively they handle evaluations and criticism. The same person further added that,

> I should have mentioned this before, a lot of the time we are counselors. I have boxes of Kleenex™ stuffed all over my office. We spend a lot of time dealing with peoples' you know emotional, psychological factors that affect or are affected by their work. It's not just about you know teaching, lecturing skills, facilitation skills, peoples' identities are caught up in all of this, peoples' sense of self-worth is caught up in all of this. I mean, there is so much of the person involved in this kind of work in the academia, you can't separate that. So you know, if you have a faculty member who's coming to you because they have students writing horrible things about them on ratemyprofessor[.com], and she is getting terrible teaching evaluations, and she doesn't know what to do, because well, she is probably up for tenure next year, the pressure is driving her absolutely crazy. We've got a very complex situation and that person needs support. And the isolation, the alienation, the feeling of being overwhelmed and having no one to turn to, these are the things that really impact faculty performance. And you can spend 10 hours a week working with them on teaching skills but if their mind is in 50 different places and they are completely emotionally overwhelmed by what's going on in their world, it won't matter, they won't be able to do it because their mind and their heart is just not there. They can't focus and they are feeling unconfident because they are being attacked by their colleagues in their departments, which happens way too often. That lack in confidence shows up in class and you have some students who can sense blood and they will jump on that person in class, which makes it worse, which makes the whole situation worse for this faculty. (Philip)

Developers emphasized that they try to support positive self-feelings by constantly reinforcing a sense of optimism and self-control in faculty. As they noted, often times anxiety is getting in the way to any progress that academics might make, so their job as developers is to help that person feel less anxious because nothing is going to happen unless that's dealt with. Several developers stated that often faculty come in a troubled emotional state and most of the time their role is to attend to their emotional needs – a claim supported by statements such as,

> I was working with a faculty member who was going through tenure promotion and they were denied tenure. It was appealed and they got tenure but when it was initially denied, they came to the teaching and learning office and that professor required [the emotional support] part, that's what they needed. (Anne)

Developers gave many examples of their audience coming to see them in a state of emotional distress. A good example of this is Michelle's statement on how scholars end up being devastated after receiving feedback on their microteaching sessions,

> We had problems in microteaching sessions in the past with really inappropriate feedback. Some of the people say really awful things. They think they are being, they think they are giving really good advice because graduate students, scholars, faculty members, we are trained to be really critical, and we are trained to be analysts and to break things down into component parts and to not be flowery, we are trained to shoot from the hip and cut to the chase…

Most of them discussed how in their role, they spend a lot of time dealing with the affective side. As one of the developers noted, "when we are working with faculty, we are dealing with the discouragement they have when they are treated badly" (Patricia), and developers don't want to

dismiss these feelings. Most of them seemed to feel that the emotional needs of people that they work with are under attended so they consciously try to focus on those. As Lauren stated,

> Emotions are very, very important when you are talking about learning because when you think of people who try to have logic right, have a logical explanation for what they do. In reality logic is a cover for what they are feeling, the brain studies have shown that you have people they would ask some questions and there are key areas of the brain that would light up emotional aspects first without even being aware of it, and then they will have the logical reason for what they are doing but the emotion was there first. And when you look at the way the brain works, emotions are immediate and the cognitive takes a few microseconds longer to start.

Developers broadly acknowledged that in their role they often get emotional information about faculty and their situation. They emphasized the importance of understanding and being sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences and, in general, to the emotional states of academics.

Summary

The picture painted in this chapter suggests that multiple factors influenced developer's use of learning theories as prescribed by their educational background, professional identify, and perceived audience readiness. We also learned that the emotional needs of their audience and seeing their work as part of a collective significantly impacted these practitioners' work. Chapter nine, offers a more elaborated discussion of the participants' use of learning theories, and reveals some of the dilemmas related to the place of theories in developers' practice.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Working in an environment that includes a university culture which values both applied research and theoretical knowledge, the participants in my study acknowledged that both perspectives are needed. It is worth noting that even though these practitioners were categorized in implicit and conscious in terms of their use of learning theories, this is an oversimplification, when, in fact, both modes can be present within each of these individuals at certain times. Also, it should be mentioned that even though the different categories were described as if they were entirely separate, all three groups have the insider perspective of practice and are guided by the particularities and complexities of specific settings, and their understanding of the contexts and audience. Conscious users can also be implicit – reflecting in/on about practice – the same way as implicit users. These developers 'transform' abstract models into knowledge they can use to guide their practice and at the same time honour and give voice to the complex and multilayered nature of their practice. The nature of their practice seems much more complex than simply specifying some outcomes necessary for them to be effective in their work. As Schön (1983) suggests, practice relies heavily on "craft-like" knowledge, a way of knowing that demands our interaction and negotiation with the setting in which we are embedded. It is my belief that a healthy university needs all groups of developers described in the previous chapters, as the types of knowledge that are generated by them, even though slightly different, are equally important.

For educational developers labelled in the findings chapter as implicit users, their concern of finding out what works and what is effective animates much of their practice and their goal is

to obtain knowledge they can use to answer some of those questions. When it comes to learning theories, these developers' collective concern seems to be providing solutions to the immediate needs of practice, rather than taking a comprehensive approach. Yet, their emphasis on what works goes well beyond finding sweet solutions to issues related to teaching and learning; the nature of their practice is much more complex. In the process of finding out what works and what is desired, these individuals render meaning and shape the nature of their practice. This negotiation of the meaning of practice, is well captured by Wenger (1998) as he argues that,

> Practice is, first and foremost, a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful...But a focus on practice is not merely a functional perspective on human activities ... it is not a mechanical perspective. (p. 51)

From Wenger's (1998) perspective, it is through their interactions with one another and the institutional demands in which they operate, that practitioners construct the necessary knowledge and make their practice meaningful. According to Wenger (1998),

> All that we do and say may refer to what has been done and said in the past, and yet we produce again a new situation, an impression, an experience: we produce meanings that extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify, or confirm – in a word, negotiate anew – the histories of meanings of which they are a part. (p. 52)

As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest, practitioners often experience research-based, outsider knowledge as theoretical conclusions that have little awareness of the context, demands, and uncertainties of their everyday practice. Their statement concurs with how the implicit users experienced learning theories. They argued that the type of knowledge and skills that is required by them is crucial to achieve practical outcomes and they emphasized and appreciated the

amount of transformation needed. Akin to what Staudenmaier (1985) states on the influence of various contextual constraints, implicit users must rework scientific concepts in order to use them, as their knowledge "is structured by the tension between the demands and functional design and the specific constrains of the ambience" (p. 104). The implicit users noted that honouring what works and recognizing that learning is situational, helped them relate to the contextual nuances of their practice landscape. This way of reasoning, which applies to those developers who are implicit with their learning theories, is desirable and valued.

Similarly, developers who are conscious about their learning theories are also influenced to some degree by contextual factors. They do have a tendency, however, to achieve comprehensiveness, and hence continuously investigate exceptions amongst learning theories. According to Hargreaves (1999a), exceptions are not self-evident; they need to be pointed out by examining one's preconceptions, beliefs, and theories. As previously stated in chapter seven, the conscious users acknowledged to consider all variables that they believe to produce a desired outcome as they appreciate 'truth', have a 'respect for logic', and have a sustained attention to accuracy.

There are limitations, however, to the orientations of both implicit and conscious users of learning theories. Educational developers whose learning theories are implicit produce knowledge on how to do, make and improve things that affect their practice. Their concern with generating a particular result may have them focus on variables considered to be important in causing an outcome, and they run the risk of dismissing those variables that might seem noncausal. Exclusive reliance on factors believed to be causal can be at times limiting and lead to less breadth of exploration, especially when beliefs are incomplete or plain wrong (Schauble, Glaser, Raghavan, & Reiner, 1991). If there are no robust criteria for evaluating inferences that

developers make, they might accept evidence that is consistent with their prior beliefs and reject the inconsistent evidence. In addition, as the implicit users noted to count on previous experiences, on what works and on 'routinization', this could lead to "knowledge becoming less explicit and less easily shared with others" (Eraut, 2004, p. 261). Yet investigating all potential factors that lead to a particular outcome can become increasingly inefficient. Hence, there are benefits to routinization, in a sense that,

> it frees practitioners' attention for monitoring what are often rapidly changing situations and for taking a more meta-like perspective on their action. We would not survive for long if we could not take for granted many aspects of what we see and do. (Eraut, 2004, p. 261)

Based on these prior experiences, people are able to recognize the situation quickly and respond accordingly. This emphasis on using prior experiences rather than explicit use of knowledge is similar to what Klein (1989) described as recognition-primed decision making and Eraut (2004) described as situational recognition.

When Rando and Menges (1991) discuss implicit theories, they define them as both "homegrown" and "unexamined" but not necessarily wrong. The authors claim that, "We are no more likely to verify them than we are to check the air before we breathe or the ground before we move our feet" (Rando & Menges, 1991, p. 9). Yet, when founded on taken-for-granted assumptions, implicit theories do not have the capability to provide an explanation as to why a phenomenon is true. When theories are made explicit, they tend to be more accurate, consistent, and organized (Rando & Menges, 1991). Going back to Argyris and Schön's (1974) concepts of single and double loop learning, while single loop learning can solve simple problems; it would not be helpful for solving complex problems. At the same time, applying double loop learning to

a situation that requires single loop learning would be inappropriate and ineffective. Ultimately, the challenge for developers is to be able to apply the most effective forms of learning – regardless of whether it is single, double or triple loop – to their appropriate situations.

The 3 Dilemmas that Developers Face

The change in the roles and goals of postsecondary institutions over the past decades has been reflected in the different types of services and programs offered by educational developers working in teaching and learning centres. This section presents three dilemmas identified from the participants in this study and recommendations in regards to what needs to be done 'going forward' when it comes to the place of theories in developers' practice. As noted in the concluding chapter of *Taking Stock*: "[E]ducational developers or teaching centres may have a particularly essential role to play – both directly and indirectly through their support of faculty champions" (Christensen Hughes & Mighty, 2010, p. 270). However, "the most critical factor determining a centre's influence on its institutional culture is whether or not it is recognized as an integral part of the colleges and universities' teaching and learning community" (Grabove et al., 2012, p. 12). For such recognition to occur, we need to better address some of the issues facing these practitioners. The interviewees in this research identified the lack of a shared language in describing the learning process amongst developers, difficulty in creating communities, and the theory-practice gap.

Lack of a shared language. Since developers come from many disciplines and backgrounds, there are problems in defining the constructs that are involved in the learning process, and difficulties with their vocabulary that have to be dealt with in an ongoing basis. Coming from different disciplines also invigorates the profession; they learn a lot from each other and the learning that can be achieved from these interactions is beneficial not only to their understanding but also to the people they work with. Yet, all the participants in this study spoke

to the challenge of lacking a shared language for learning theories, but were unsure as to the nature of that language. They mentioned that it is important for them to be all on the same page and use the same vocabulary on how they view learning in order to clearly and consistently articulate that base of understanding of critical concepts and the collective messages that they want to convey. The problem with everyone having their own definitions of learning theories is that it leads to misunderstandings, and semantic arguments about the meaning of the words. The need to establish a shared language and theoretical base was also made by Harland and Staniforth (2008) worrying that academic development is presently too diverse and in danger of fragmentation. They echoed Andresen's (1996) call that "it is absurd to try and fit everyone within academic development into the same conceptual mould, but we also think it reasonable that academic developers share an understanding of the practical, conceptual and theoretical base of their work" (Harland & Staniforth, 2003, p. 29). Collectively defining learning theories as a group and creating meaning seems to be a significant step forward in helping developers have a shared vocabulary. As cited in Donald's (1986) paper, "disciplinary boundaries are barriers to understanding, but they are minor compared to the barrier created by the lack of vocabulary to describe the learning process in consistent, explicit and operational terms" (p. 2).

Difficulty in creating communities. For Etienne Wenger (1998), a primary focus is learning as social participation; the process of learning by actively participating in social communities, and constructing one's identity through these communities. According to Wenger (1998), communities of practice occur when people who share a concern or a passion in an area, collaborate over an extended period of time, sharing ideas and strategies, and finding solutions. The learning that takes place is not necessarily intentional. As people interact regularly, they address the tacit and dynamic aspects of building and sharing knowledge, as well as the more explicit aspects (Wenger, 2006). Not only that, but communities of practice also enable

practitioners to take collective responsibility for recognizing, creating, and managing the knowledge they need (Wenger, 2006). The various communities of practice to which educational developers belong "offer intangible value to members through their ability to facilitate relationships with professional colleagues (often geographically dispersed), engender a sense of belonging, forge a spirit of inquiry, and impart a sense of professional competence and identity (Wenger et al 2002)" (McDonald, 2011, p. 172).

Developers in this study acknowledged that it is becoming harder to build communities as they are not hiring or getting a huge influx of new people due to budget cuts. Hence, there is "little mutual observation" and the creation and sharing of knowledge is happening at "a fairly superficial level" (Eraut, 2000). As Eraut (2002a) rightly questions "How often does the 'accolade' of being described as a 'community of practice' go beyond wishful thinking?"(as cited in Eraut, 2004, p. 266). Also breaking down the traditional academic silos so that people come together and talk to each other is always a challenge. Participants in this study mentioned they are all siloed into a particular role, and this often results in people working in different niches but having a common goal. The participants wanted their academic environment to be more of a collective community and argued that successful universities need to bring the right people together, and provide an infrastructure in which communities can thrive. "When the assumptions of a community of practice are challenged, they are made more explicit; this is what is happening now to the profession of academic development" (Malcolm & Zukas, 2000 as cited in Bath & Smith, 2009, p. 11).

Theory-practice gap. The participants in this study acknowledged that it is not enough for a theory to explain how people learn; they need to know what the implications of theories for practice are and how they translate in the educational context. In addressing the question, "How do we bridge the contested territory between theory and practice, knowing very well that both

perspectives are needed but neither can suffice" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001, p. 15), the authors argue that,

> This demands that we weave delicate webs of the general and the particular, finding ways to enrich our personal experiences through studying the experiences of others, seeking theoretical insights that give meaning to what we do, or raising skeptical questions about what we think we know. (p. 15)

If we are to avoid reducing our theories to beliefs, we must engage in a "persistent activity of framing, of 'meta' examination of all that transpires, but again, only within its particular context" (Goldberg, 2000, p. 125). As he concludes, "one cannot operate according to a fixed set of rules and an expectant analytical method, any more than one can operate with a totally flexible set of rules and an equally unexpectant method" (Goldberg, 2000, p. 127). The study participants seemed to critique the traditional notion that practice is inherently inferior to theory while at the same time acknowledged that promoting the other extreme is equally problematic. This is consistent with Dewey's (1988) pragmatist approach in which "genuine knowledge comes neither by thinking about something abstractly nor by acting uncritically, but rather by integrating thinking and doing, by getting the mind to reflect on the act" (Badley, 2001, p. 11). As Deming (1993) noted, "Without theory, experience has no meaning…one has no questions to ask. Hence, without theory, there is no learning" (p. 105). All participants in this study concurred in that people shouldn't use theory just for the sake of using theory and have these become what Ball (1995) described as "mantric theory"; that is, becoming unhelpful mantra which obscure rather than clarify. When Ball discusses the role of theory in his paper he adds that,

> Theory can also work to provide comforting and apparently stable identities for academics in an increasingly slippery world…Too often…theory becomes no more than a mantric reaffirmation of belief rather than a tool for exploration and for thinking

> otherwise. Such mantric uses of theories typically involve little more than a naming of spaces…(Ball, 1995, quoted in Ecclestone, 1996, p. 152)

Practice and theory cannot exist without each other; hence, it becomes even more important to negotiate the relationship between the two. As Heidegger (1991) stresses, speaking of the Greek *theoria*: "It was not their wish to bring practice into line with theory, but the other way round: to understand theory as the supreme realization of genuine practice" (pp. 31-32). The educational developers in this research noted that often their attempts to apply theories to the particular context seem flawed. In this case, Gordon (2009) argues for a clearer notion of learning theories,

> Theories that are not only descriptive or explanatory, but also prescriptive, in the sense that they speak directly to the practical concerns of developers. A descriptive learning theory is often understood as a series of epistemological and ontological assumptions [whereas] a prescriptive theory includes not only general statements about knowledge and learning but also practical recommendations and advice for practice. (pp. 40-41)

Suggestions for the Dilemmas

Most developers expressed difficulty in applying theories to their particular context. If developers wish for theories to play a more significant role in shaping their educational practice, I suggest that they spend more time on the following three areas: (a) self-awareness process; (b) make their practice more explicit; and, (c) collaborate.

Self-awareness process. My first recommendation refers to developers having an awareness of their current theories as a way of identifying any inconsistencies that might exist. Engaging in self-analysis to examine contradictions and discrepancies is crucial to the self-awareness process. This process could offer extensive details about different ways of conceptualizing practice and re-shaping practice, and is considered to be a precursor for entering

the dissonance stage. As expressed by Nealon and Giroux (2003), even though, we all have personal beliefs underlying our actions "unless we can ask theoretical questions…about the origins of knowledges, who holds them, and how such knowledges were formed and might be changed – we're stuck in a go-nowhere exchange of opinions" (p. 4).

The approach is concurrent with the model of learning Marton and Booth (1997) present. They, too, put a strong emphasis on the role awareness has in the practice of professionals, and claim that when the learner has learned something, that individual "has become capable of discerning aspects of the phenomenon other than those she had been capable of discerning before" (p. 142). The authors add that only through awareness of essential aspects of the phenomenon, the person can examine discrepancies between beliefs and actions. As Hamachek (1999) puts it: "Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are" (p. 209). Of course focusing on what is implicit can make people feel uncomfortable; it is much safer to stick to ways of thinking and acting that we are conscious of and familiar with. Yet, it is beneficial for developers to push their boundaries and go beyond their comfort zone. This way developers will recognize that some risks are involved in genuine professional learning – risks which require that they stretch their comfort zones – just as they ask their audience to do the same. This awareness involves a closer scrutiny of one's theories of learning in order to enhance the knowledge about practice. I concur that in the field of educational development we must illustrate rigour in researching our learning theories and we must "subject our entire experience to criticism, even our tacit understanding" (Raelin, 1997, p. 502). It is important for educational developers to examine the underlying assumptions that sometimes they do not even realize they are making, and if they could understand those more they could be more effective in responding to their audience's needs.

Through this process of self-awareness, we would also address Mezirow's (1991) three forms of critical reflection. Content reflection entails reflecting on the content or description of how we have implemented each phase of solving a problem. Process reflection, on the other hand, consists of examining whether the procedures and strategies in solving the problem were adequate. While premise reflection questions the relevance of the problem itself, and is distinguished this way: "In premise reflection, we question the very questions we have been asking in order to challenge our fundamental beliefs and go beyond taken-for-granted assumptions" (Raelin, 1997, p. 567 citing Mezirow, 1991). The self-awareness phase can be used, therefore, to transform practice by having developers examine taken-for-granted assumptions and question not just knowing what and how, but knowing why. Creating possibilities for 'unpacking' practice is thus important in offering insights into ways that might help developers better understand what is happening in different situations and why.

Make their practice more explicit. My second suggestion – for educational developers to make their practice more explicit – goes hand in hand with the self-awareness process. People have expertise that they bring to the table, but it is important to articulate that expertise explicitly so that when discussing issues and making decisions and bringing the collective expertise together, they are able to have those conversations based on common understandings and know what they are all talking about. There are ongoing meta-level discussions amongst developers about why they do what they do, why they run a certain kind of program rather than another kind of program, why they would run a workshop in a certain way, thinking of how the people they work with learn and what they need to know, the paradigms that are in place in different countries, and how developers can best communicate all of this. Developers could take the lead in showing the importance of an awareness of their theories and of course how they are related to their practice. Articulating how learning theories help developers become more effective and

efficient would also build credibility in the field of higher education as a whole. Not to discount other forms of learning, developers would be lost without those, but to critically investigate the theories underpinning those other ways of knowing. Since one's purpose for researching practice is to better inform one's practice, one needs to push the boundaries and carefully examine the theories that guide thinking and decision making. By engaging in a self-study and researching their own practice, Mitchell (1999) and Boyle (2002) were able to identify and confront taken-for-granted assumptions. As Eraut (2004) noted this process, "requires considerable self-awareness and a strong disposition to monitor one's action and cross-check by collecting additional evidence in a more systematic manner with greater precautions against bias" (p. 255).

A prime requirement is to make learning theories part of the culture of teaching and learning centres and to ensure that they are present in the interactions that developers have with one-another. "Centres must also be cognizant of, and engaged in inquiry into, the underlying values and assumptions that shape current educational development practices, and into models and approaches that could enhance or transform their future impact on teaching and learning" (Grabove et al., 2012, p. 19). It is true that learning theories are personal but how theories affect developers' practice could be more broadly communicated within the centre's strategic direction, vision and philosophy. This process is not trying to homogenize developers and have them espouse the same learning theories, but be explicit about these beliefs regarding teaching and learning. Theory shapes the way that information is framed and communicated. Hence, my suggestion for going forward is to build on a proactive stance and explicitly articulate theories that developers use. Koschmann (2000) argues that we have an obligation "to make explicit our theories of teaching and learning ... that motivate our work and that are embedded in our designs" (p. 2). Marland (1995) explains that,

> Implicit theories cannot be studied until they are first made explicit . . . asking teachers to articulate their implicit theories inevitably involves them in a process of discovery. . . Finding appropriate and valid ways of making implicit theories explicit is therefore a major methodological challenge. (p. 133)

Only this way would it be possible to build robust theories of learning – theories that have the power to explain how people learn – and develop increased capacities to interrogate practice. I want to encourage explicitness because I believe that if the basic assumptions and theories underlying the field are clearly articulated, they could provide a positive direction going forward and contribute to a better understanding of the field.

Collaborate. My third recommendation stems from a common theme in this research study, which is the sense of community that the participants have from engaging in educational development endeavours. The research participants mentioned the type of learning that occurs more as a participative social process and emphasized learning from their colleagues. When people within a community interact on an ongoing basis, the learning that occurs has the potential to be at the same time collective and solitary (Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni, 2008). This type of learning stems from the frequent discussions that take place among individuals who share ideas, meanings, and interpretations. In the absence of formal training and with few opportunities for informal exchanges, sabbatical leaves, and visiting fellows programs, developers must seek other means for participating in professional learning and building ongoing collaborations in the field.

As discussed and elaborated in previous chapters, educational developers often enter the field from different disciplines; hence, not all have the same background and knowledge related to learning theories. This lack of knowledge may be addressed by engaging the disciplinary expertise of colleagues with background and experience in learning theories. Those who are

engaged in theoretical work have a greater responsibility to make sure that the theories they are sharing with those who don't have time to investigate them themselves are good theories, meet rigorous standards, and explain the phenomena they ought to explain. In order to build and sustain effective and ongoing professional development in the field, there should be frequent communication between those who are conscious of learning theories and those who are not, as in many cases the two communities are labouring side by side and are composed of people with similar goals. The suggestion parallels nicely with how Wenger (1998; 2006) portrayed and characterized 'community' within his construct of communities of practice. The community serves as a backdrop or as a "learning curriculum" (Wenger, 1998) which consists of a series of learning experiences gradually increasing in engagement and complexity within the community of practice. Eraut (2009) further reinforced the importance of working alongside others and collaborating as it enables individuals "to observe and listen to others at work and to participate in activities; and hence to learn some new practices and new perspectives, to become aware of different kinds of knowledge and expertise" (p. 17).

Collaboration leads to a re-shaping of practice whereby engaging others in the process equips people with a different perspective of their work. Involving others in the process of learning also leads towards a more reflective practice. It is through their experience and interaction with others, that learners reframe their knowledge base by critically examining their practice. As Wenger (1998) suggests, in the process of participating and contributing to make that practice what it is, we learn and grow as professionals. Although additional research is needed to explore the implications of the three different types of developers in the same centre and the types of interactions that are occurring, the current findings hold relevance for educational practice. As developers begin to acknowledge the limitations of everyday ways of thinking, the

interactions with their colleagues can be used as a foundation to transform that informal knowledge of learning theories into a more formal and analytical scientific inquiry.

CHAPTER TEN: LEARNING THEORIES AND THEIR PLACE IN THE PRACTICE OF DEVELOPERS

Introduction

This study began with reading an article from Rowland and colleagues, in which they describe developers as "lost amongst their cyclical, circular and spiralling 'theories' of learning, detached from any subject matter, they become like...professors who have nothing to profess" (Rowland, Byron, Furedi, Padfield & Smyth, 1998, p. 135). This thought-provoking comment sparked an interest in wanting to know: (1) more about developers' conceptions of learning theories, (2) how learning theories fit in their practice, and (3) put Rowland et al.,'s claim in its place. I have participated in the work of educational developers within one of Canada's leading post-secondary institutions, and I have seen the benefits and challenges of implementing learning theories in the classroom. Also, as a lecturer in graduate and undergraduate anatomy courses, I value any action that enables me to improve my ability to meet the needs of my students. At the same time, I have also struggled to understand how my own theories of learning can shape my teaching practices and more effectively respond to the university context. I believe this research is timely now as the field is still solidifying and situating itself in the higher education landscape.

My research draws from and contributes to the scholarship of educational development. I hope that the study will represent a vehicle for the 'development of developers' and help these practitioners reflect on the relevance and effectiveness of their learning theories. In addition, my research contributes to the emerging body of scholarship focused on the credibility of educational developers, their knowledge base, and their place in academia. In this chapter, I summarize research findings, discuss the implications of the study for practice and theory, and suggest directions for future research.

Summary of Study Findings

This research began, as noted in chapters one and four, with the overall question: *How do learning theories fit in the practice of educational developers?* In addressing this question, I tried to capture and portray the experiences of developers by taking an exploratory qualitative approach, while drawing upon the learning theories and educational development literatures. My study findings are a result of semi-structured interviews, as well as artifacts from developers' work, and the results of the Teaching Perspectives Inventory. I interviewed 11 Canadian university educational developers from nine institutions, working in campus-wide teaching and learning centres.

As noted in the chapter summaries, educational developers: (i) conceptualize learning theories as lowercase 'lt' as opposed to uppercase 'LT', and (ii) developers define learning theories based on their prior disciplines. The participants in my sample brought similar definitions to the idea of a learning theory, yet they were all different from the traditional, academic description of learning theories, or what I would call capital L capital T. Most of them lacked formal knowledge of learning theories and had created their own synthesis of theories. In other words, they didn't associate learning theories with formal academic theories, which are aimed at understanding a situation; instead most developers used theories to reveal certain aspects of a situation that would help them answer how to act in that situation. The majority of the participants struggled to articulate their definition and understanding of learning theories. It could be that the participants had never previously been asked to articulate their conceptualizations of their theories or that the various terms used to describe them are discipline-specific. In fact, in most cases, the way the participants defined and conceptualized learning theories corresponded to their prior disciplines. There was no consistency as to what a learning theory really is, and the language that developers used when they discussed their understanding

of learning theories was in accordance to their former disciplines and areas of study. As mentioned in chapter six, there were philosophy, language, educational-psychology, holistic, and neuroscience-based definitions of learning theories among developers. These definitions are recognized in the learning theories literature as being among the many ways theories are categorized, noting that in different academic disciplines, different families of theories reside (Bandura, 1982, p. 750). As the field of educational development is building capacity, it is important that we have a clear understanding and description of the constructs that we study. There may never be a complete agreement among educational developers on what constitutes a learning theory. At the very least, though, developers should have some underlying principles or values to which they collectively ascribe to; more attention should be paid to those underpinning assumptions so that the theorizing doesn't simply collapse.

In terms of how theories shape developers' work, participants were categorized in three groups: (1) those who had an implicit use of learning theories (seven in total); (2) those who had a more conscious use of learning theories and were interested in further investigating them (three in total); and, (3) one developer who had characteristics of both groups. Educational developers whose learning theories were implicit were characterized by a focus on the outcome, emphasizing what has worked for them in the past, and by their inability to articulate learning theories. These practitioners seemed to rework and translate traditional academic concepts in order to serve practical ends and accommodate the characteristics of the audience. For this group, what has worked in the past has served them to confirm or dismiss initial hunches they may have. Meanwhile, three developers were conscious about their learning theories and how theories impacted their practice. All three were able to explain how beliefs, intentions, and actions in the TPI relate to each other and they had consciously thought about changes in their TPI scores. When asked about learning theories, all three developers in this group were able to clearly

articulate and define learning theories, and explain how their theories have changed through the years and what has contributed to or caused those changes. They see the 'added value' of theory and appreciate how theory intersects with their practice.

One developer, although she didn't have the confidence to further investigate her own learning theories, had discussions with her colleagues as to which learning theories they aspire to and why. She kept emphasizing the importance of making her practice more conscious by conducting systematic inquiry to see how the theories align with her practice and why they work. When discussing the spectrum, this participant identified with the implicit position; however, she also stated that a reflective component must be added as well as even though she might have her learning theories merged with other factors, she always reflects on every experience and how learning theories cause a particular outcome. Collectively these types of experiences capture two of the three forms of learning described by Eraut (2004) – the implicit and deliberative. He contrasts implicit learning, which is unintentional and tends to occur independently of conscious attempts to learn, with deliberative learning, which represents a devotion of time and effort toward acquiring new knowledge and skills. Also, as noted in chapter seven, these categories seem to correspond to single and double loop processes of learning.

Three factors that seemed to carry across the participant group with respect to how learning theories fit in their practice were: (1) their educational background in terms of how much exposure they had to learning theories; (2) their professional identities; and (3) perceived audience readiness. All factors suggest finding value or lack of in learning theories. The amount of exposure they have had to learning theories, how much usefulness they see in incorporating theories in their practice, and their need to feel at home in this field through theories, ultimately indicate their level of appreciation towards learning theories. More broadly, along this continuum, those participants whose learning theories were implicit struggled with differentiating

learning theories from the myriad of variables that impacted their practice. Most of them acknowledged needing gentle probing to respond to the questions on certain learning theories as they didn't have that knowledge. They all noted that they come from backgrounds with limited to no exposure to learning theories. Meanwhile three developers had comprehensive and long-term exposure to learning theories, and felt comfortable discussing various theories. Also, the developers who were conscious about their theories expressed the need to stay in touch with their prior discipline and that learning theories gave them a feeling of belonging. They noted that theory has an important place in their professional identity as developers. All developers in my sample mentioned the audience as one of the most important factors influencing their practice and emphasized that educational development is a "developing office" and so it is "other-oriented." Interestingly, those whose theories were implicit didn't think that the audience was ready or interested to know about learning theories. This differed from the other group who seemed to take a more proactive approach by building some of that knowledge and start leading some of the research in this area to raise faculty's awareness and to inform them on different theories.

The participants mentioned several other factors influencing their practice; the two most commonly cited being: seeing their work as collective, and attending to the emotional needs of their audience. All participants emphasized that the team they work with and the interactions they have are an important factor in their practice. Developers with different expertise co-participate, each in their own ways, as integral and constitutive parts of the collective (Roth & Barton, 2004) in resolving issues related to teaching and learning. Coming into the field with such diverse backgrounds they see it as an advantage not a shortcoming to the profession as they think the answers to a lot of questions and issues in education need to come in dialogue and exchange. This collaboration builds "a mutually positive attitude between fellow professionals… necessarily

reciprocal and as such cannot be sustained by only one of the parties involved" (Fielding, 1999, p. 14). As Taylor (2005) reminds us, the educational developer position "requires a collegial posture in the way academic expertise is applied to help others solve problems on their own terms" (p. 37). This factor speaks to the social aspect of educational developers' practice through sharing and learning from each other to achieve a common purpose. Also the study participants saw their role as so inextricably related to the emotions of their audience and noted that responding to this need is essential in their position. Most of them seemed to feel that the emotional needs of the people they work with are under attended so they consciously try to focus on those. Noddings (1984) reminds us of the significance of caring as a crucial and fundamental goal of education.

Some Implications

Throughout the interviews, participants identified some areas that needed further attention in their field. In this section, I present some of these concerns that need to be addressed for educational development to continue to build presence in the higher education scene.

Knowledge base. With developers coming into this field from various educational backgrounds, there is a need to identify their knowledge base, skills, and areas of expertise. What does disciplinary knowledge in educational development entail? How would an understanding of learning theories fit into that? One of the participants described it as the surface and deep approach to educational development where the surface approach is having just an awareness of the most popular theories, and the deep approach is having an understanding of learning theories and furthering their own thinking about them. I believe the bar we want to set is having educational developers that are able to take both approaches. Developers wouldn't go as far as saying to be in this field you have to be grounded in educational theory as having multiple perspectives builds a better practice; they see their work as a complex endeavour since they are

required to work effectively with many functional groups within their institutions. The challenge for developers is that they need to understand how to work with colleagues, manage staff, motivate people, manage projects and they acknowledge that there is a whole body of literature around each of those areas as well that they should know, so that they are responsive to all the different audiences and needs. If educational development is seen in this broader perspective – that it is not just about working with the individuals but working with entire institutions and trying to bring changes in institutions and beyond – keeping current with best practices is important and learning theories are just a small part of what they need to know. However, for too long the knowledge base of educational developers has gone largely unrecognized mainly due to the implicit nature of such knowledge.

Engaging in professional development. Developers are taking on more responsibilities as educational development is moving from the periphery to the centre of postsecondary institutions and higher education overall. All participants in my study spoke to the challenge of spreading themselves too thin and seeing how much still needs to be done, and they struggled to engage in certain aspects of their own professional development. While they participated in conferences, meetings and other networking opportunities, they acknowledged that they would like the literature to influence them more as right now it is difficult for them to allocate time to read or be engaged in research. Attention should be paid to the training and learning needs of educational developers so that they have opportunities to lead and advance within the field. For example, how will allocating time for doing that research and being engaged in professional development, be accounted for in their time, efforts and salaries? Also, providing opportunities for developers to build an appreciation and applied understanding of learning theories is vital if they are to explicitly articulate their learning theories and incorporate them in their practice. Simply exposing these practitioners to theories, and engaging them with articles in this area is not

enough; it is important to find value in the role of theory so that it becomes part of their culture of learning and expectation for their role.

Educational development and its "territory" in higher education. Bath and Smith (2004) describe the notion of territory in the context of academic development as an attempt for the field to be "recognized as a legitimate area, with its own traditions of research, scholarship, and practice" (pp. 9-10). The emphasis on accountability and quality assurance measures in higher education have helped educational development to become an established and recognized field, as institutions are counting on educational developers, to address some of these challenges and tensions. These changes have helped educational development to be considered a "discipline in its own right" (Bath & Smith, 2004); however, they have also been a source of tension with respect to developers being seen as a threat and appearing to interfere with academic decision-making processes.

As much as academics value the knowledge and expertise that educational developers bring to help them solve complex issues on teaching and learning, they are still sceptical of developers telling faculty to change their teaching methods and approaches. Other sources of tension include what initiatives are prioritized within centres and the messages they want to convey, what is expected from the centres, what are their collective goals, what they need to be mindful of in terms of content embedded, and what things should be brought forward to reflect personal goals, and craft those in a language that reflects the goals of the institution as well. As educational development continues to gain presence and build capacity, there will still be uncertainties when it comes to the place of educational developers in academia and attention is needed toward addressing the concerns that come with it.

Credibility and confidence. For educational development to grow and evolve, it is necessary that the field gains legitimacy and credibility. Many participants were fully aware that

they are perceived by some faculty and administrators as individuals known to “talk the talk but not necessarily walk the walk” and acknowledged that it is important to demonstrate that they follow those practices that they “preach.” Not only that but several identified themselves as former outsiders in the field or as individuals with imposter syndrome after having abandoned their original disciplines. Hence, they expressed a desire to feel competent and confident in their practice. Along with gaining credibility and confidence participants in this study discussed the importance of: being presented with opportunities to teach; having a doctorate; and to conduct research themselves. They agreed that having an opportunity to teach both through the centre and through their own prior disciplines helped them in their work, acknowledging the importance of stepping back once in a while and putting themselves ‘in the shoes’ of the instructor they are trying to help. In terms of level of education, the participants noted that it is prevalent in the educational development field right now that more and more people with PhDs are being hired. McDonald (2011) found similar tensions in her doctoral work focused on educational developer’s pathways to the profession. The participants in my study believed it was necessary backing up what they say with scholarship and seeking confidence from credible and trustworthy sources, as this not only improves their practice, but it also enhances their reputation in the academic community. It is important to talk about teaching and learning in a way that connects these concepts to the research, as it will add value to developers' work, and help them better support the learning of their client base.

Professionalization of the field. All participants in this study mentioned the move to professionalize educational development and it was interesting to find that there were many differences among developers on this subject. There were those who see it as a necessary step in order for the field to be recognized as legitimate and worthy of respect and credibility, and others who consider the professionalization of the field a detrimental move for the profession. Those

who find it a terrible move to professionalize educational development believe that this is a wrongheaded way to try to gain prestige and strongly opposed developers wanting to be seen as traditional faculty to whom "being a professional means having a set of letters after their name" and going through a particular curriculum and a certain process. Those developers believe that they professionalize over time with experience and with mentoring. They all mentioned having effective mentors who came from different disciplines and took very different approaches; it was that mentoring process, doing things with them that professionalized their approach. Some participants were hesitant in committing to one way or another, as much as respecting others people's disciplines and their diverse perspectives, they noted that there are risks if they are not professionalizing. If the field formalizes developers need to consider the type of knowledge base and credentials that are needed to enter and be successful in the field. For example, how will such changes impact how much value is placed on learning theories? Too much emphasis on theories leads to the risk of latching on to certain theories and then overprescribing them; hence adhering to principles of good practice is important.

Measuring impact. The participants in this research continuously came back to what they found to be a challenge in their practice, namely measuring the impact of their work. They all spoke to the struggle of assessing their program effectiveness. They acknowledged that measuring impact on teaching and learning is inherently difficult to do. This very important aspect of their practice has largely been missing in the past not only due to the difficulty of this kind of work but also for a long time there was no interest in it. They agreed that there have been some anecdotal indications and evidence of success but they have to be really creative and explore how they can best address this issue. Being able to measure impact is a selling point that the field can use to market itself and obtain funding. As the participants themselves acknowledged, with increased accountability and pressure, institutions are looking for strong

evidence of impact and tying funds to centres that demonstrate positive and successful outcomes. As more initiatives to measure program effectiveness become popular, new questions will surface with respect to how do developers redefine their practice to promote approaches that are effective? A better understanding of the practice of developers, their knowledge base, and the nature of their work is vital in addressing such concerns.

Future Areas of Research

The findings of this study have generated some important ideas around the practice of educational developers. These areas may be of interest to future researchers and are presented here as recommendations for further studies. Further exploration of some of these suggestions has the potential to address some of the issues identified by developers in this study, and support the growth of the field.

1. While my research provides some elucidation with respect to the developers' conceptions of learning theories and how theories impact their practice, because of the small sample recruited for this study, I do not know whether most developers would have described similar experiences. Not only that, but sampling for future research needs to expand to include developers from the same centre if we are to examine how communities are formed within the centre. Since one very important aspect of developers' work was the collegial nature of their practice as evidenced in my research, future work investigating developers from the same centre will provide valuable insights into the type of knowledge, skills and attitudes developers contribute to the collective knowledge base, orientations and practices. Understanding the experience of a wide range of developers is needed before recommendations or guidelines intended to apply to a wider educational development population can be developed.

2. The current research relied on self-reporting and claims of developers as a measure of their understanding and impact of learning theories. A study using feedback and observations from a variety of sources could help in the triangulation of data. Including measures such as teaching philosophy statements, reports from colleagues and faculty, and conducting observations and visits during their sessions with faculty would be beneficial to further our understanding of how theories fit into developers' work. When people are asked about their behaviour in a particular situation, most of them respond with their espoused theory of action – the theory that guides their aims and intentions (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985). I was able to analyze some of the artifacts that developers had produced, and this process captured some of their actions and not what participants think, hope, or believe they do. This research offers a starting point for thinking further about learning theories but it leaves a significant gap in looking at espoused and actual used theories.

3. This study was limited to educational development centres in Ontario Universities; it would be worthwhile examining centres in other provinces as well. Only by studying different institutions in Canada and examining their variations, it will be possible to capture how other factors such as type and culture of the institution, size of the centre, and so forth, moderate the results of this study.
4. For this study, I kept my definition of educational developers very broad. Upon initiating the study though, I realized that developers even though might have the same title, often have different focus (e.g. supporting only graduate students, conducting research at the centre, and the like). When embarking on similar studies in the future, it will be important to strive for more clarity and precision of constructs such as educational developer.

5. The exploratory nature of this study offered the opportunity to better understand the practice of educational developers and to identify some factors in general that impact their work. As exposure to learning theories was one of the factors influencing the extent to which learning theories impacted developer's practice, it would be valuable to pursue a study with developers at different points in their careers. While it appears from the present study that the more developers are exposed to learning theories, the more value and usage they find in them, future studies are needed to understand the experience of a wide range of developers at different stages in their careers.
6. A brief overview of learning theories was presented in chapter three of this study. Given the large number and diversity of current learning theories, there is opportunity and merit to establish a broad structural framework on the formulation and development of theories. By doing so, important questions as to how theories vary from discipline to discipline, from person to person and from situation to situation will be addressed.

It is hoped that this research contributes to our understanding of this group of developers in Canadian institutions, and that it will continue to generate discussions and future research in this area. The importance of educational developers and their vital role in higher education merits such attention.

Concluding Remarks

While this thesis began with a thought-provoking comment, I was intrigued with further exploring new questions that were both puzzling and exciting. I initiated this study to get a deeper understanding into how learning theories fit in the practice of educational developers and have developed along the way an admiration of the openness and collegiality that are characteristics of this profession. The search for bringing theory and practice together has been going on for a long time. For much of that time I have been critical of the relative neglect of

theory in the work of practitioners. I still view theory as important. Of late, however, I have begun to understand and appreciate other ways of manifesting knowledge and forms of knowing. I sympathize with those developers who struggle to define theories and instead had formed their own synthesis of learning theories. There are some important questions to ask when considering how much weight to place on theory or how valuable a theory will be for each developer's practice. Acknowledging the limitation of theory is critical as it may well emphasize just one aspect, be incomplete, or simply irrelevant in specific contexts. Understanding the developer's role and position in a collegial environment, may be equally, if not more important than accepting or dismissing learning theories. There are some issues and dilemmas facing educational developers in the years to come, as discussed in the previous sections. This community, however, is both reflective and resourceful, and I am confident they will continue to bring this field to new heights.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear [name of participant],

I would like to invite you to participate in a study that aims to identify and explore learning theories of Educational Developers. As a doctoral candidate, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, I am conducting this research towards my dissertation. The focus of the study is to gain a better understanding from the perspectives of Ontario Educational Developers in university educational development centres, on how theories of learning shape their work. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study, as your professional opinion and experiences will help me explore the phenomenon under investigation. Your participation will potentially help you as an Educational Developer as you will be able to thoughtfully revisit the views you hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching.

A description of the data I hope to collect is attached to this e-mail, along with my responsibilities for this research and the consent form. Signing the consent form is not like signing a contract; your participation will always be completely voluntary and flexible. Please contact me if you are interested in participating – and if so, please let me know which option is easiest for you: i) sign the consent form at the time of the interview and give it to me in person, ii) scan the signed consent form and send it back to me, or iii) I can send you the consent form and a pre stamped envelope to mail it back to me. You can call me at _____or e-mail me at klodiana.kolomitro@utoronto.ca should you have questions or comments about your participation. Your participation in this research is imperative to the success of the study.

Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this study.

Sincerely,

Klodiana Kolomitro, PhD candidate
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APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

send in OISE/UT letterhead

Dear [Name of Potential Participant],

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a study that aims to identify and explore learning theories of Educational Developers. The investigator, who is affiliated with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, is conducting this research towards her PhD thesis. The focus of the study is to gain a better understanding of how theories of learning shape your work as an Educational Developer. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study, as your professional opinion and experiences will help me explore the phenomenon under investigation. Your participation will potentially help you as an Educational Developer as you will be able to thoughtfully revisit the views you hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching. Approximately 15 Educational Developers are invited to participate in this study. Results of the study, which will be available to you, will help to further improve the quality of educational programs and support offered to university instructors and graduate students.

Initially I will ask you to select 2-3 artifacts which are representative of your work, and ask you to provide me with copies of the artifacts you have selected. Then, you will be invited to participate in an initial one-on-one interview and a follow-up interview. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes each and will be conducted at a convenient and mutually acceptable time and location for both you and the researcher. The interviews will be audiotape recorded. Prior to the follow-up interviews, you will be asked to complete a Teaching Perspectives Inventory. The inventory takes approximately 10-15 minutes to be completed. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. This is <u>not</u> a contract. Even though, you may sign this form, your participation will always be completely voluntary and flexible.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. The interview questions and inventory deal with common aspects of your work and should not cause any discomfort. The audiotapes will be used only for data collection and analysis. Your responses will be confidential. To protect confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym for use in description and reporting the results. All data, including the audiotapes, will be held in locked file cabinets and secure computer files, accessible only to those who are directly involved with this research project (researcher and thesis supervisor). This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, books, and professional publications. Your name will not be attached to any form of the data that you provide, nor will it appear in any publication created as a result of this thesis work. In any publication based on the study, all potentially identifying information will be omitted or changed. After the transcripts have been reviewed for accuracy, the audio-tapes will be destroyed and only the transcripts will remain for a period of five years as required by SSHRC policy.

Should you have any questions about you or your rights as a participant in this project please contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. I would like to thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this study. There is no monetary compensation, but you will likely learn from the experience of reflecting on your own work as an Educational Developer. If you have any questions about the project, I am happy to speak with you.

Sincerely,

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Consent to Participate − Please complete this form and return it to the principal investigator. I have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information/Consent Form and all my questions have been sufficiently answered. I am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study and I have been notified that participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any point during the study without any negative consequences to myself. I have the freedom not to answer any questions. I have also been told the steps that will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all information.

I am aware that if I have any questions about the research ethics of this project, I can contact the University Toronto Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in the project as described above.

(Printed Name of Participant) (Signature of Participant) (Date of Signature)

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Initial Interview

I want to thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. Your contribution is crucial to the success of this research. This study is on learning theories that inform educational developer's work and I am looking forward to discuss with you how learning theories fit in you work. Before I officially begin the interview I wanted to reassure you that I will be using pseudonyms and that I will omit any potential identifying information. Do you have any other questions regarding the consent form or the interview process?

Topic 1: Background/Role and Responsibilities/Views on Teaching and Learning

What is your educational background?

How long have you been working at _____? Have you worked in a similar position prior to coming here?

What path led to this current role (was it planned? fortuitous? Etc)?

How would you define your role and responsibilities?

What does it mean to you on a personal level to work in educational development?

What are you trying to accomplish in your role at this centre? What are your instructional goals? How do you go about it (What kind of strategies do you use)? What learning outcomes occur? Why do you think those strategies/approaches would work?

What do you believe to be effective teaching in higher education? What do you want the faculty who comes here to learn? Why?

We talked a lot about your goals and the strategies you use to achieve them. My area of interest is learning theories. What are your thoughts on learning and on how adults learn best? Why?

Topic 2: Conceptions of Learning Theories

What is your understanding of the idea of a learning theory? Can you talk to me a little bit about how theories of learning affect both your goals and the strategies you use? Why/not?

Let's have a look at these five learning theories. What do you know about them?

Topic 3: Use of Learning Theories

To what extent do they impact your work (How have learning theories been incorporated in your daily practice)? Why or why not?

Talk me through the process of how you would actually enact this learning theory (what kind of elements might I see reflecting this theory)? What factors influence your ability to enact (implement) that learning theory?

Let's have a look again at the artifacts. Which learning theories are the basis of the activities and describe your rationale? Have your learning theories changed over the years? Please describe some of these changes. Could you give me an example? What motivated these changes? Were other learning theories initially considered and rejected? Which ones? Are there other learning theories that you would like to use more often but cannot because of restrictions (i.e., nature of work, resources, etc)?

How do you feel the learning theories that you espouse have impacted teaching practices of the educators you support?

Topic 4: Other Factors
[touch upon this, to continue in the follow-up interview]

How do you know when your sessions or learning experiences you design and deliver are successful? When things don't go so well, what do you think the reasons are? You can use examples to illustrate if you like.

At the End of the Interview:

- see if they have anything else they would like to add or that we should talk about before the interview ends
- remind them that I will be sending the link to the Teaching Perspectives Inventory in the next two days
- schedule the follow-up interviews

Follow-Up Interview

I want to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this follow-up and final interview. Do you have any questions from our meeting last month? This interview is intended to discuss the Teaching Perspectives Inventory, the results of which you kindly shared with me, and to reflect on some of your statements from the first interview. First, do you need a refresher on the meaning of the five perspectives?

Topic 1: Teaching Perspectives Inventory
[relates to Topic 1 in the initial interview and their views of teaching and learning]

Can you please explain why do you prioritize this perspective?

Why don't the other perspectives resonate with you (what's wrong with them)? What learning categories might be missing in the TPI?

Please explain the extent to which you might consciously consider these perspectives in your work.

Topic 2: Other Factors
[relates to Topic 4 in the initial interview]

Please explain what factors influence your work as an educational developer?

Topic 3: Use of Learning Theories/Factors

Please explain the extent to which you consciously take specific learning theories into consideration when you do your work. Examples.

What are some of the reasons or factors that influence your use (consciously or otherwise) of learning theories in your work?

What could prevent you to concentrate in learning theories in a conscious way
Can you give me concrete examples? For examples, the artifacts that you send me, how did you develop those? How do the learning theories you endorse fit there?

So if we think of a spectrum [explain the spectrum] and ask where do they think they fit?

At the End of the Interview:

- ask them if they have anything else they would like to add or that we should talk about before the interview ends
- thank participant for their time
- remind them that you will be sending a summary of the results once available