

Using a Social Enterprise Experiential Learning Model for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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Introduction & Background

The **Education and Skills Training** (ESTR) program has been offered at Thompson Rivers University for over 30 years

Evolved and integrates **experiential learning** opportunities on and off campus



Local, handmade, sustainable, and healthy products made by a variety of businesses, artisans, as well as by the ESTR students.

ESTR's Market is a new social enterprise (SE) that began operation on campus in 2014

Entrepreneurial and essential workplace skills

Problem Statement



- **Social enterprise (SE)** and social entrepreneurship
 - is a **non-traditional pedagogy**, yet can be a practical solution for adult learners
- **Social Innovation Grant**, Vancouver Foundation
 - Support marginalized groups in education or community through social justice
 - Project needed to be 'cloneable'
- **Vancouver Community College**
- **Louis Riel School District** in Winnipeg operate a SE

Queen, 2015

Literature Review

Government of BC has committed to making BC a truly inclusive province by 2024

- \$1.5 million to be invested in innovative training at post-secondary institutions for individuals with disabilities and that various work experience opportunities be explored

Enhance integration for youth with disabilities into experiential learning opportunities

Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth 2018



Province of British Columbia, 2018: Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities 2018

Research Focus



Inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programs & Experiential Learning

Social (SE) enterprise & social entrepreneurship

Benefits and challenges of social ventures

IPSE Programs

Employment and post-secondary education = **adulthood and achieving full citizenship**



Education is a basic right in Canada



Opportunities for research and innovation



Increase employment & self-determination



Align to missions of lifelong and equitable education



Inclusive Education Canada, 2017: Aylward and Bruce 2014: Baker, Lowrey, and Wennerlind 2018

Experiential Learning or work integrated learning



Learning by doing 20th century John Dewey



An **essential component** in post-secondary education



Integrated & align with into curriculum outcomes, incorporate assessment and reflection

McRae, Pretti, and Church, 2018

Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

business model
↓
social mission

Elson, Hall, Wamucii, 2016: Webber, 2012: Kalargiros & Kutz, 2018: BC Centre for Social Enterprise
2020: Saebi, Foss & Linder 2019



Social role valorization (SRV) and normalization theory

by Wolfensberger

Enhances image & competencies by improving perceived social value of marginalized populations



Serving soup at ESTR's Market

- SRV can be an authentic and effective way to genuinely address education, training, and employment needs for people with “diverse-abilities”

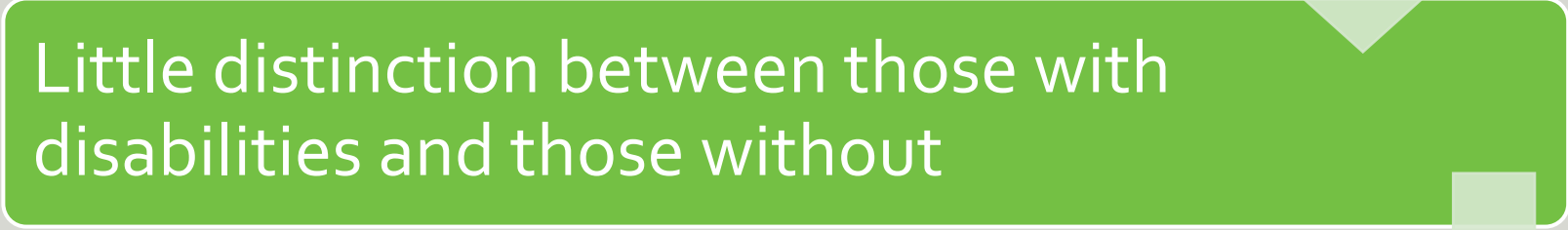
Osburn, 2006: Lysaght, Krupa & Bouchard, 2018: ouimette & Rammler, 2016

Advocating for social inclusion

Highlights diversity



Little distinction between those with disabilities and those without



Stimulates interactions with the public



Greater self- confidence can lead to more social activities



Benefits of social enterprise models



SRV and self-actualization

strength-based & person-centered approach

social inclusion that expand networks

self-image and confidence

Transition to Labour market

advancement of public policy & active citizenship

Smith, McVilly, McGillivray, and Chan, 2018: Lysaght et al., 2018

Challenges

- Balancing the **social, financial, environmental, and educational**
- Quality work-integrated learning in post-secondary = **curricula, assessment, and reflection**
- Developing the 'right kind'
- Investing in **business planning, promotional & marketing**



Ouimette and Rammler, 2017

Intent of Research Project

To **identify**, and **highlight** in a **celebratory** manner, the opportunities for :

- student learning and growth
- social aims of justice, equity, and inclusion

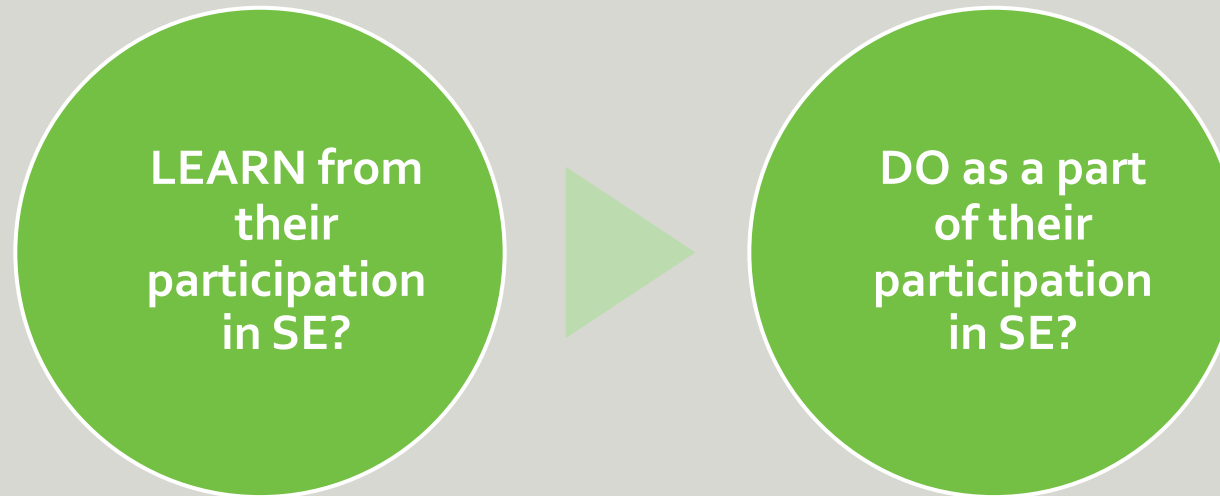


Methodology - Photovoice and talking circle

- a **flexible, adaptable, and participatory** action research method
- Based on **Freire's educational theory of critical consciousness**:
 - photo documentation and dialogue used to analyze people's lives and community in order to produce change

Wang & Burris, 1997; Latz, 2017

What can students:



Student Participants and Process



Thompson Rivers University Ethics approval



Consent forms to participation and use of their photos and narratives



Students in ESTR are diverse



11 out of 15 students from the Kitchen & Retail Streams



Data Collection



- Students took photos during the last 3 weeks
- Support from a Work-Study student
- The final step was the narration
- Group talking circle

Talking Circle

- narration was through **talking circles** & 'Storytelling', a traditional Indigenous practices fosters **inclusive pedagogy**
- the photos are **data antecedents** - trigger responses from participants
- active and participatory process
- Due to COVID 19, two **virtual talking circles** and two students sent individual videos
- A "pizza lunch" **celebration** conclusion to this project



Smeda, Dakkich & Sharda, 2014; Latz, 2017

Data Analysis:

- students expressed pride and confidence
- **transcribing and coding**
- two broad categories emerged: *interactions with others* & *specific tasks and skills*

Four themes Emerged:

- 1) Relationship building and teamwork
- 2) Social connectedness and serving customers
- 3) Specific job skills and entrepreneurship
- 4) Employability or transferrable skills



Student Photos, Perspectives, and Reflections

- valued their peers and the importance of **teamwork**
- liked team **building** and **getting closer** to his classmates
- “bonded over the amount of biscuit making”
- the term “**camaraderie**” for the positive relationships
- **interpersonal skills** & being helpful and patient with others



Theme # 1- Relationship building and teamwork

- enjoyed working with the **outside helpers**
- Work study and practicum students, volunteers, and people they interacted with during special events like Wellness team
- Elder Doreen



Making bannock with Elder Doreen



Consignor – Authentically Indigenous by Gwen



HUMS Practicum



Work Study Student



Wellness team

Student Photos, Perspectives, and Reflections

customer service or
hospitality

“liked serving soup and seeing the long line up of customers and being able to brighten up their day with the soup or specials that they made.” this made him feel happy and productive



*Theme # 2 – Social connectedness
and customer service*

- “It warms my heart. It amazed me how happy customers were.”
- “favorite day was when we sold chicken tacos because they were so popular.”
- safe venue to practice talking to customers



Meeting new people and practicing interpersonal skills

Student Photos, Perspectives, and Reflections

Specific technical or jobs

- baking, cooking, knife skills, food safe, handling money, point of sale system
- making coffee, packaging items and organizing products
- “favorite part was feeling like a positive contributor.”
- proud of the things learned



*Theme # 3 – Development of job skills
and entrepreneurial competencies*

- Entrepreneurial skills & opportunity to be **creative**
- **Confidence**, and discovering new skills or interests



Counting money



Making coffee



Taking out the garbage



Being precise and working on quality

Wellness team

Student Photos, Perspectives, and Reflections

- safety conscious, communication, organizing, taking initiative, helping others, and problem solving
- improved work speed and consistency
- “being time-sensitive” while also producing quality items



Theme # 4 - Employability or transferrable skills

- trying new things & adapting to situations
- “you need to get out of your comfort zone.”
- ability to manage multiple tasks **independently** and taking **initiative**

*Open House
Display!*



Being creative!



Video of Kitchen student describing
her photos



Instructor Photos & Perspectives, through Written Reflections

By Saskia:

“cohesiveness”

“transference of skills into
other life situations is a
valuable life skill and
supports life-long learning”



Apple and pumpkin pie making

- “My own confidence, pride and sense of accomplishment in them has grown as well and often the students surpass my expectations in what they can accomplish.”
- “confidence; self-esteem, a sense of purpose, social capital, customer service skills, connection to community and sustainability”



Taking pride in his work



Making friends



Proud to make bannock

Instructor Photos, Perspectives, and Reflections

By Leanne

strength-based

disabilities are not viewed as deficiencies

peers identify strengths in one another and make positive comments

- “this person is great with technology or this person makes the best coffee.”

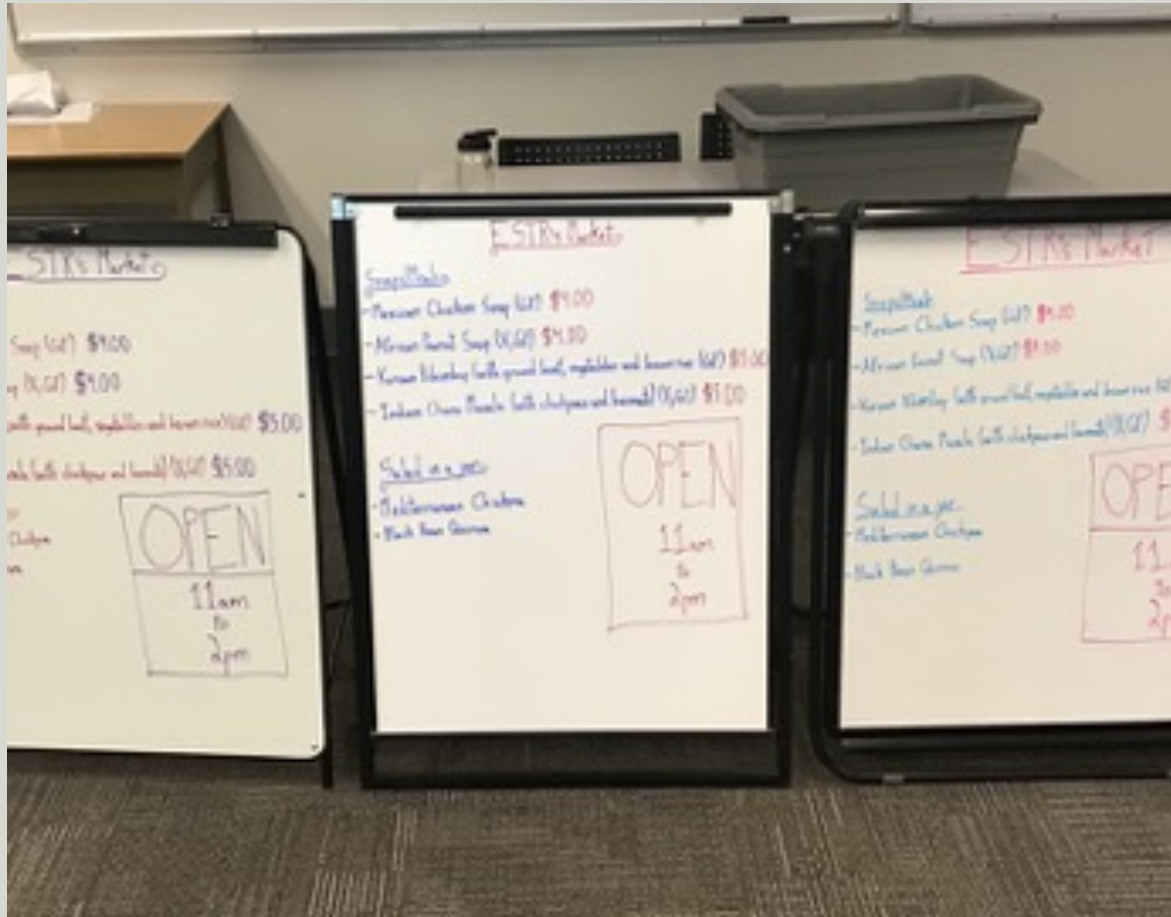


Focused and being so precise

- **Customers** also gave **compliments** such as work speed, or their confidence in operating the point of sale and serving customers
- **External interactions** are integral to the experiential learning goals

Strength-based Approach

With great pride these signs were meticulously made each week



Merchandising and making new displays



Sense of community and positive culture

- Dispels negative stereotypes & advocates for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion
- Greater awareness on campus
- Pride & ownership
- People enjoy the market because of the students



Alignment with Personal Teaching Philosophy

Teachers are **'perpetual beginners'** and need to continually self-reflect, resist **'habitual patterns'** & identify oneself as **agents of change** - Educational philosopher, Maxine Greene

Caring relationships - equity over equality, focus on strengths, interests, and abilities

Experience as integral to learning

"A Curriculum for Miracles" - a flexible and natural progression of wonder, creativity, and learning

"A Curriculum for Miracles is ecological, bursting forth from the understanding that the more diverse an environment is, the more creative and emergent the possibilities"

(Jackie Seidel, 2014, p.13)

