INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING: THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Melissa R. Peet, MSW PhD
Academic Director, Integrative Learning and Mportfolio Initiative
ijb@umich.edu
WHAT IS INTEGRATIVE LEARNING?

Helping students to:
- Integrate knowledge from different courses
- Applying knowledge gained from one place to a new situation
- Connecting learning experiences to their own identities, sense of purpose and sources of engagement
- Identifying and connecting both tacit and explicit knowledge
CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFELONG LEARNERS

Lifelong learners are able to:

- adapt to changing conditions, emergent knowledge and new information
- reflect on and learn from life experiences
- identify their own limitations
- Continually know how to seek and respond to feedback from others and the environment
CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATIVE LEARNING

- Problematic assumptions about knowledge, learning, and human development
- Fragmented Curriculum
- Tacit Knowledge
CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATIVE & LIFELONG LEARNING

Institutional Needs VS. Students’ Needs

Need to provide evidence that students are achieving specific and distinct competencies

Need to reflect on learning, connect separate experiences and integrate knowledge with their own identities

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A capacity learned or demonstrated in one place does not automatically translate to other contexts; adaptation must be facilitated!
A problematic assumption: ‘Real’ learning primarily occurs through cognitive understanding of expert knowledge that is combined with self-awareness.
CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATIVE & LIFELONG LEARNING

Students do not naturally integrate their learning & higher education institutions do not address this need.
Where do we go from here?

New Science and Human Development
The key to integrative learning: understanding that we are dynamic self-organizing systems.
We are made of dynamic chaos and complexity – emergence, change and learning are the most natural things we do...
When we interact with the new information or new experiences, we develop new unconscious connections....
If these connections are reinforced, they give rise to new patterns of coordinated intelligence.
Key questions:

How do we support students in developing new forms of coordinated intelligence over time?

How do we help them identify and demonstrate this intelligence as it is emerging?
Implications

- Change and learning are the most natural thing we do.
- We are not aware of most of the learning that takes place within us.
- In order for a dynamic self-organizing system to learn, grow and evolve, it must develop and maintain a coherent center capable of coordinating and synthesizing new information.
Action Research 2002-2006

- What kinds of pedagogy, curriculum, etc. do students need in order to become leaders and change agents?
- What kinds of actions, characteristics, etc. do emergent leaders and change agents possess?
2002-2006: identifying gaps & developing solutions

- What does all this social-justice stuff mean?
- How do I translate what I’ve learned to the real world?

We need FAR LESS CONTENT & much more time to connect, reflect, integrate – to put all the pieces together
There are Many different levels of knowledge
The Discovery of Generative Knowledge Interviewing

Explicit & Formal knowledge
Cognitive
Experiential
Affective
Intuitive
Tacit & embodied Knowledge
THE PRINCIPLES AND STEPS OF THE INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE PORTFOLIO PROCESS
Inspiring Involvement in Community Projects

Introduction

No collaborative work gets done without people of diverse talents who believe in what the group is doing as a whole. For some of those members, information is self-sought; participation follows naturally. For the vast majority of others, group involvement has to be inspired by another passionate person. Through my leadership roles in a number of student organizations, I’ve developed both my philosophy and ability in motivating people to action.

When serving as the co-chair of the homeless shelter volunteer program SWAT Hunger (Students Working Against Today’s Hunger) for my community service fraternity, I spoke about the program at chapter meetings, often with over 200 people in attendance. I needed to motivate members to choose the shelter, over many other worthy projects, as the place to dedicate their time. When staffing a table for the literacy group WE READ at an annual student organization fair, my goal was to recruit new talent. I wanted to inspire writers and artists to craft children’s books for Detroit elementary school students and engage volunteers in visiting classrooms to read with those children on a weekly basis.

Importance of Work

At the Shelter Association, volunteer support for cooking and serving is crucial
Identifying tacit knowledge gained from formal and informal learning experiences

Who am I? What am I learning? What engages and inspires me? How am I making a difference?

Retrieving prior knowledge & key learning experiences

Imagining the future: intentions, goals & potential roles

Understanding how one interacts with others, listening and seeking feedback

AN INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE APPROACH SUPPORTS HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION

LIFEWIDE

LIFELONG
1. Identify and Briefly reflect upon Key Prior Learning Experiences from academic, co-curricular and other life contexts
2. Organize Key Learning Experiences into Knowledge/Skill Categories for Portfolio
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3. Write a series of Knowledge Synthesis Pages (approximately 2 pages in length) in response to Integrative Knowledge Questions

- What did I learn and why was it important? What were my “a-ha” moments?
- How does this learning experience relate to other contexts or experiences?
- What knowledge, skills &/or capacities did I gain or demonstrate?
- How does it relate to my own interests, passions or goals?
- How might I use this knowledge in the future?
3. Incorporate Generative Knowledge Interviewing into meta-reflection process

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FROM IMPACT OF WORK:

Our research work prompted churches and their members to consider the importance and impact of integrating education, prevention and coping strategies for mental health into the black church and community.”
FROM SKILLS GAINED:
From this course, I refined my ability to precisely pinpoint the ways in which I choose to use language. When given a quotation...I would originally focus on my own feelings. My excitement over all of the interrelated but irrelevant ideas associated with a text passage would distract me....
4. **Identify values and sources of motivation – create Philosophy Statement:**

- Articulate strengths, values and commitments
- Demonstrate how these shape actions decisions & goals

Over 85% of students say that creating a philosophy statement is the most difficult yet rewarding aspect of the Integrative Portfolio Experience
My passion evolves from my desire to alleviate social, cultural, economic, and spiritual poverty. I was born into training as a social activist. While growing up, the poverty line was my tent. I went to failing public schools and I’ve seen many things. According to backhanded jargon, I would be considered "At Risk".

My passion evolves from my desire to alleviate social, cultural, economic and spiritual poverty...I was born into training as a social activist...the poverty line was my tent. I went to failing public schools...In college, I have thought deeply about differences...preparedness for college, family structure, support systems...mental wholeness.... I have become a knowledge producer, an activist and a change agent...

I feel that I can use my experiences in life to relate to others similar to me. A personal goal of mine is to motivate others into action. While the fear of the unknown is deconstructed there is nothing but possibility left. I convey to others that I'm not the smartest person, nor am I special, I wanted a different life and if they wish for something else, it is available to them also.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose
5. Connect Portfolio Pages to institutional outcomes

After creating Examples of Work, Students reflect on how the work Illustrates different learning outcomes.
2011 FIPSE GRANT

THE LIFELONG LEARNING CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION PROJECT
RESULTS: ON PRE/POST SELF-ASSESSMENTS, 620 STUDENTS ACROSS 14 LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN THEIR ABILITY TO:

1. Identify, demonstrate and adapt knowledge gained within/across different contexts
2. Adapt to differences in order to create solutions
3. Understand and direct oneself as a learner
4. Become a reflexive, accountable and relational learner
5. Identify and discern one’s own and others' perspectives
6. Develop a professional digital identity
Import students stand out:

- Immediacy of responses
- Coherence of self
- Self-direction & internal locus of control
- Ability to use embodied language
RESEARCH RESULTS: 2009-2010
Analysis of students portfolio pages:

- Identify knowledge they didn’t know they had
- Translate knowledge from one place to another
- Seek feedback and input from others and change their thinking and actions as a result
- Develop capacity to imagine future roles
Questions

- What ideas do you have so far?

- Where do you see the Integrative Knowledge Portfolio Process working in your environment?
You can contact Melissa Peet at melpeet@gmail.com

  https://www.mededportal.org/publication/7892
  (free access through site registration)

  http://www.theijep.com/current.cfm (free access)

- FIPSE grant site
  https://sites.google.com/site/generativeknowledge/home

- Generative Knowledge Institute
  http://generativeknowledge.org