SOCIO-CULTURAL INCLUSIVENESS AND WORKPLACE E-LEARNING:
FROM DOMINANT DISCOURSE TO DEMOCRATIZED DISCOURSES

By

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Abstract

Technological enhancements and economic gains are the dominant focus of normalized research of workplace e-learning programs. This is not, however, equivalent to discovering whether or not workers are actually experiencing any socially and culturally meaningful learning from workplace e-learning programs.

This thesis advocates socio-cultural inclusiveness research on workplace e-learning programs. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research takes into account the learning needs of workers with respect to their various social differences and culturally unique identities that affect, mediate, and interpret workers’ learning.

The intent is to transform perceptions of workplace e-learning programs, from technological artefact to ideational discourses. Discourse Analysis is applied as a socio-cultural approach to ten passages that have been extracted from ten examples of normalized research published over the past decade. This is done to explore whether a normalizing paradigm is noticeable and how such a normalizing paradigm might lead workplace e-learning programs to socially marginalize and culturally exclude workers.

To discursively analyze the passages and identify a normalizing paradigm, this thesis applies ‘Discourse model’ as ‘tool of inquiry’. Discourse models reveal heuristic, taken-for-granted assumptions about what is socially normal and culturally representative in talk and text. The normalizing paradigm that does emerge from this cursory analysis, constructs
normalized e-learning as the conflation three assumptions: technological proficiency; economic efficiency; and, training consistency. This normalizing paradigm socially justifies workers in the workplace through normalized e-learning.

To promote democratized counter discourses, this thesis puts forward critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks that enable praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. This thesis relies on three critical perspectives to discursively resist three formal biases inherent in normalized e-learning that emerge from this normalizing paradigm. Using a critical pedagogy perspective, this thesis reflects on the formal bias of ‘standardization’ and its alignment with ‘training consistency’ to discuss ‘worker-worker’ alienation from ‘pedagogical standardization’. Taking a critical culture perspective, thesis hones in on the formal bias of ‘categorization’ and its alignment with ‘economic efficiency’ to elaborate ‘worker-work’ alienation from ‘cultural categorization’. With a critical history perspective, this thesis focuses on the formal bias of ‘operationalization’ and its alignment with ‘technological proficiency’ to expand on ‘worker-identity’ alienation from ‘ahistorical operationalization’.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
Motivation of the Thesis

Dominance of Normalized Research

E-learning programs for workplace education and training interventions, as we recognize them today, are just over a decade old (Downes, 2005; Honey, 2001). Yet the influences of workplace e-learning programs on workplace education and training interventions are evident and growing in magnitude (Little, 2002; Pantazis, 2002). By ‘workplace e-learning programs’, this thesis looks to Honey’s (2001) definition, that “e-learning is the process of learning from information that is delivered electronically….It leaves us, the learners, to identify relevant information, convert it into something meaningful and apply it appropriately” (p. 201). ‘Workplace education and training interventions’, for this thesis, encompass the formal and informal activities that workers undergo resulting in individual, social, mental, or embodied growth, all associated with work (Fenwick, 2001).

Two central interests of ‘technological enhancements’ and ‘economic gains’ preoccupy current workplace e-learning research that has been put forward by governments, industry, and academia over the past decade (Bell, Kanar, & Kozlowski, 2008; Galagan, 2001; Industry Canada, 2005; Pollitt, 2005; Sims, 2008; SkillSoft, 2006). These dominant discourses lead to normalized workplace e-learning research (hereafter, ‘normalized research’). By ‘normalized’, this thesis looks to May and Finch (2009) who define the process of normalization as “the work that actors do as they engage with some ensemble of activities (that may include…thinking, acting, and organizing) and by which means it becomes routinely embedded in the matrices of already existing, socially patterned, knowledge and practices” (p. 540). For this thesis then, ‘normalized research’ speaks to marketable automation and information; commodification of knowledges, skills and
competencies; resources, efficiencies, and savings; scale economies; and, informationalized assets. Costs, profits, hardware, and software, all comprise the dominant foci. Precedence is given to economic or technological objectives to dictate what does or does not qualify as a ‘good’ and ‘legitimate’ research goal for improving workplace e-learning programs. The conceptions of normalized research at present are characterized by these two dominant points of view.

Aims of the Thesis

*Socio-cultural Inclusiveness Research*

With this in mind, this thesis puts forward socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘socio-cultural inclusiveness research’). By ‘socio-cultural inclusiveness research’, this thesis means workplace e-learning research that takes into account the learning needs of the workforce with respect to their various social differences and culturally unique identities that affect, mediate, and interpret workers’ learning. Social learning needs may include differences in race, gender, age, ability, language, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Cultural learning needs may involve workers’ various identities and the multiple communities where workers have membership, as well as the numerous institutions that workers affiliate and associate themselves with, whether these institutions are social, economic, political, religious, professional, or artistic in purpose (Alfred, 2002a, 2002b; Biklen & Casella, 2007; May & Finch, 2009). Socio-cultural inclusiveness research also recognizes the ethics, values, and aesthetics of workers from their opinions, and in their own words (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gee, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).
The reasons why socio-cultural inclusiveness research is noticeably minimal when it comes to workplace e-learning programs are becoming more visible. The pace of technological progress and growing economic pressures placed on normalized research and workplace e-learning programs often exceed the capacities of most adult education research to put forth study that takes into account the technological and economic and the socio-cultural (Lim et al., 2009). This leaves adult education scholars and practitioners in a lurch with respect to responding to the intangible, marginalizing, and exclusionary impacts of considering workplace e-learning programs through the narrow and preset lenses of normalized research.

Bron and Schemmann (2002a) and Dirkx (2006) affirm that conditions inherent to the field of adult education also add to this tension. Adult education has little theory original to the field. Few in the field actually engage in theory building. Adult education practitioners are unwilling or unable to participate in prolonged reflection due to the (economic and technological) challenges they face in practice. Salas et al. (2002a) expound at some length on the disconnect between empirical study of workplace e-learning programs and decision-making for workplace education and training interventions, suggesting that ultimately, “The problem is compounded because…those who have pressing organizational problems for which they need solutions, are not communicating with researchers” (Salas et al., 2002a, p. 136).

The technological and economic objectives are given priority in normalized research. The importance and necessity for reflexivity in thinking about socio-cultural inclusiveness research and workplace e-learning programs is imperative in terms of the potential socio-cultural learning implications on the workforce. Whereas normalized research
decontextualizes and normalizes e-learning around technological enhancements and economic gains, socio-cultural inclusiveness research recontextualizes e-learning. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research makes workplace e-learning programs: (a) an integral part of the broader social activities and cultural identities of workers as social beings in the world; and, (b) an experience that bears social and cultural consequences for workers’ learning. Such consequences stretch beyond technology and economics and reach outside of the workplace.

*Main question.*

A shifting of perspectives of normalized research in a new direction may be one means of engaging workers’ social and cultural learning needs from workplace e-learning programs. This thesis encourages change in normalized research by asking:

What critical perspectives may be put forward to assist socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs?

*Perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks for praxis.*

This thesis addresses the dearth of socio-cultural inclusiveness research on workplace e-learning programs. This thesis puts forward four critical perspectives that enhance socio-cultural inclusiveness research: (a) critical pedagogy; (b) critical culture; (c) critical history; and, (d) critical discourse. What is meant by ‘critical perspective’? This thesis relies on Bron and Schemmann’s (2002a) distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘perspective’. ‘Theory’ refers to generalizations that assist in classifying the world; explicate social and behavioural phenomena; as well as, propositions about society and progress that can be empirically
tested. On the other hand, a theoretical ‘perspective’ relates to a panoptical viewpoint, lens, or idea, encompassing several theories and is much less formally organized.

This thesis goes further and proposes several taxonomies and frameworks that enable praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. The perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks are all intended to scaffold current (normalized) research towards increased socio-cultural inclusiveness from workplace e-learning programs. By grounding these perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks in liberatory and emancipatory notions as democracy, identity, and voice, the dominant technological and economic conceptions and practices driving normalized research are now open to question, critique, and challenge. All this is done for the social and cultural learning needs of a growing, global, diverse cohort of adult learners who may be increasingly experiencing technologically and economically driven workplace e-learning programs.

*Recontextualizing and redressing normalized e-learning.*

As this thesis will show in Chapter 2, one outcome of normalized research is increasingly normalized workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalized e-learning’). Normalized e-learning also focuses on technological proficiency and economic efficiency as gauges for training consistency. The evaluation of workers’ performance from normalized e-learning is thus also assessed against profit gains, cost efficiencies, and technological applications. A ‘good’ and ‘legitimate’ workplace education and training intervention is a by-product of normalized e-learning that epitomizes technological enhancements and economic goals (Galagan, 2001; Harun, 2002; SkillSoft, 2006).

This excitement around normalized e-learning and its potential for workplace education and training interventions, combined with technological and economic foci of
normalized research, have resulted in three consequences with respect to the social and cultural learning needs of a diverse and global workforce: (a) research that should be done, but isn’t; (b) research that is inconclusive or subsumed under technological and economic agendas; or, (c) research that is being done, but not reaching workplace education and training practitioners (Salas et al., 2002b).

Conducting normalized research on how to make normalized e-learning more technologically capable or more economically lucrative is not, however, equivalent to ensuring whether or not the workforce is experiencing socially and culturally meaningful learning. When focusing on normalized e-learning as a completed and finished ‘thing’, little room remains to consider the learners and the quality of their learning. The focus stays on the ‘technological or economic artefact’ and the benefits that it produces, distributes, and generates. The social, cultural, negotiable, and ideational, all are silenced by the technological and economic.

Social justice.

The implications for workers’ social and cultural learning needs of normalized e-learning and normalized research are now also open to scrutiny. In arguing for socio-cultural inclusiveness research, certain unseen workplace learning inequities now become visible: (a) problems for workers in the current context for learning; (b) the ethical and critical implications of individual variability in individualized and personalized ways of being; and, (c) how diversity and a global workforce shapes and interprets learning (Webster-Wright, 2009).

There are socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary learning implications for the workforce from making technological enhancements and economic gains the overriding
purposes behind normalized research and normalized e-learning. One of the greatest risks of normalized research is that workers too become conceived as static; artefactual; homogeneous; and, immutable. The normalization of priorities around economics, hardware, and software, all overlooks the workforce and their socio-cultural learning needs. When it comes to the workforce, such exclusion and marginalization effectively undermines any possibility of socio-culturally meaningful learning from normalized e-learning.

Opening up the technological and economic aspects of normalized research, and including socio-cultural inclusiveness research, is necessary for the benefit a globalized and socio-culturally diverse workforce (Bron & Schemmann, 2002b; Jarvis, 2006; Sorokin as cited in Johnston, 1996). More often than not, normalized research is done to the workforce; on behalf of the workforce; and, as the workforce is told, all is for their benefit. The workforce and their social and cultural learning needs, views, and opinions, are all but subsumed under technological or economic mandates (Industry Canada, 2009; Pathlore Software Corporation, 2004; SkillSoft, 2006). Under these conditions, normalized research is incapable of critically identifying and addressing the social and cultural learning needs of a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gee, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Looking at normalized e-learning with socio-cultural inclusiveness research, and not solely with normalized research, the workforce and the quality of their learning and educational experiences now come to light more authentically. When doing socio-cultural inclusiveness research, the adult learners and their knowledges rejoin the discussion. The adult learners’ lend their voices to the discourses of normalized research as it takes shape and becomes meaningful to them. The adult learners now reveal their social needs and cultural
values that motivate them towards learning (Su, 2007). When it comes to adult learners and the quality of their learning experiences, altering the dominant conceptions of normalized research towards socio-cultural inclusiveness may be tantamount to a more socially just workplace education and training intervention from normalized e-learning.

Approach of the Thesis

Socio-cultural inclusiveness research as an approach remains under-recognized and underemphasized for normalized e-learning. For this thesis, ‘approach’ refers to:

the big picture. It answers such questions as: What does this approach get you? How does this approach frame a question? How does it understand a problem? How did it lead you, guide you, and shape the work that you did….the research process and how it frames the world. (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 79)

The intent of this thesis is to encourage a transformation in the approach of normalized research. The shift also involves changing perceptions from perceiving normalized e-learning as only an acontextual, technological and economic artefact, to also conceiving normalized e-learning as a socio-culturally negotiated idea or discourse. The focus moves away from the normalized research of normalized e-learning, and moves towards the ideational and discursive through socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

Socio-cultural inclusiveness research challenges viewing normalized e-learning as concrete and determined. Instead, alternate research approaches adopt emergent, relational, socially constructed, contextual, and interpretive aspects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The socio-cultural acknowledges the ideational and not just the technological or economic. Such juxtapositions conceive of normalized e-learning in flux and interconnected with heterogeneous ecologies of conversations, communities, situations,
emotions, and power. Normalized e-learning now becomes under-determined, negotiable, and malleable (Feenberg, 2008). Considering normalized e-learning not only as ‘artefact’ but also as a fluid (socially and culturally constituted and perpetuated) ‘idea’ may provide the impetus to move the thinking of normalized research away from the economic and technological and towards the socio-culturally ideational and discursive. Thus, the methodology, analyses, perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks proposed by this thesis, all follow this same change in perceptions.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter 2-Methodsology

This chapter describes the methodology of this thesis. This thesis approaches socio-cultural inclusiveness research in two steps. In Step 1, Gee’s (2005) approach to Discourse Analysis is applied as a socio-cultural approach to ten passages that have been extracted from ten examples of normalized research published over the past decade. This is done to explore whether a normalizing paradigm is noticeable; what normalizing paradigm shapes normalized e-learning; and, how such a normalizing paradigm might lead to marginalizing and excluding some groups in the workplace through normalized e-learning.

To discursively analyze the passages and identify a normalizing paradigm, this thesis applies only one ‘thinking device’ from Gee’s (2005) repertoire of ‘tools of inquiry’. This particular tool is called ‘Discourse model’. Gee (2005) explains that, especially where adults are concerned, Discourse models provide heuristic, taken-for-granted assumptions about what is socially normal and culturally representative. The Discourse model of normalized workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘Discourse model of normalized e-learning’) that emerges from Step 1, socially and culturally constructs normalized e-learning as the
conflation of: (a) technological proficiency; (b) economic efficiency; as well as, (c) training consistency. In so doing, it also functions as a normalizing paradigm.

The relevance of Step 1 speaks to the praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Step 1 considers whether normalized research, and its dominant foci of technological enhancements and economic gains, perpetuates a normalizing paradigm. For normalized e-learning to become more socio-cultural and inclusive, exclusionary and marginalizing paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) must first be identified.

Step 1 confirms the need for socio-cultural inclusiveness research. The identification of a normalizing paradigm, along with its exclusionary and marginalizing assumptions, also confirms a need for critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to scaffold normalized research to allow for more socio-cultural inclusiveness research of normalized e-learning. However, Step 1 does not represent a rigorous, extensive, empirical study. Instead, Step 1 is better understood as a cursory, exploratory analysis with limited transferability and idiographic generalizability.

Now that a normalizing paradigm is noticeable in Step 1, this thesis next turns to the issue of finding relevant critical perspectives. This is the purpose behind Step 2. In Step 2, Feenberg’s (2008) critique of social rationality acts as an interpretive and conceptual framework (Biklen & Casella, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Feenberg (2008), as an interpretive framework, reveals that social rationality is embedded into normalized e-learning. The principles of social rationality and their respective formal biases fit nicely with the normalizing paradigm from Step 1. This is shown in Table 1.
Table 1
Social Rationality in Normalized E-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle of social rationality</th>
<th>Formal bias</th>
<th>Normalizing paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal exchange</td>
<td>Standardization through markets</td>
<td>Training consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification and application of rules</td>
<td>Categorization through bureaucracy</td>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal effort and calculation of outcomes</td>
<td>Operationalization through technology</td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that normalized e-learning signifies rational, modern societies’ tendencies towards social rationality, then normalized e-learning also contains social rationality’s formal biases; and, normalized e-learning also generates socio-culturally alienating implications for the workforce. The alienating implications are three-sided: (a) worker-worker; (b) worker-work; and, (c) worker-identity. This sets the stage for identifying relevant critical perspectives to inform socio-cultural inclusiveness research in response to this workforce alienation from normalized e-learning.

Next, using Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as conceptual framework, each of the remaining chapters in Step 2 (that is, Chapters 3, 4, and 5) takes their impetus from Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as conceptual framework to focus their arguments. Each chapter explores the alienating implications of one particular form of formal bias in normalized e-learning. Each chapter comprises a series of extensive literature reviews and survey’s of empirical studies and theoretical examinations of normalized e-learning (primarily over the past two decades) that draws in on one aspect of formal bias and the socio-cultural consequences on learning of workforce alienation.

Using a critical pedagogy perspective, Chapter 3 draws in on the formal bias of ‘standardization’ and its alignment with ‘training consistency’ to discuss ‘worker-worker’ alienation from ‘pedagogical standardization’. Chapter 3 looks at three areas of pedagogical
standardization in normalized research: (a) distance education from tertiary sector institutions; the turn to constructivism; and, the universalization trends of workplace education despite a diverse and global workforce.

Taking a critical culture perspective, Chapter 4 hones in on the formal bias of ‘categorization’ and its alignment with ‘economic efficiency’ to elaborate ‘worker-work’ alienation from ‘cultural categorization’. Chapter 4 explores three areas of ‘cultural categorization’ in normalized research: (a) workplace changes in terms of the diversity of the workforce, the knowledge-based economy, and work itself; (b) dominant discourses of e-learning as exclusionary cultural categories; and, (c) alienation of the workforce and adult education practitioners stemming from the marginalizing effects of digital divides and disintermediation.

With a critical history perspective, Chapter 5 focuses on the formal bias of ‘operationalization’ and its alignment with ‘technological proficiency’ to expand on ‘worker-identity’ alienation from ‘ahistorical operationalization’. Chapter 5 considers three areas of ‘ahistorical operationalization’ in normalized research: (a) infallible technological innovation and the fallible worker; (b) (re)shaping of normalized e-learning and worker identities over time; and, (c) the technological artefacts of normalized e-learning, including web-based learning, learning objects, and learning management systems, as instruments of identity-centered alienation.

Table 2 presents a summative glimpse of the subsequent three chapters that comprise the remaining, critical analytical components of this thesis (that is, the remainder of Step 2). The critical analyses in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, all lay the groundwork for identifying critical
perspectives and designing the taxonomies and frameworks for socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter and title</th>
<th>Normalizing paradigm</th>
<th>Critical perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Universalized workplace education.</td>
<td>Training consistency</td>
<td>Critical pedagogy: Worker-worker alienation from pedagogical standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The knowledge-based economy and e-learning: Critical considerations for workplace democracy.</td>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
<td>Critical culture: Worker–work alienation from cultural categorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Infallibility of innovative artefacts.</td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
<td>Critical history: Worker-identity alienation from ahistorical operationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recall that Step 1 undertakes socio-cultural inclusiveness research by using a socio-culturally oriented approach (Discourse Analysis). This is consistent with the overall message of this thesis towards considering normalized e-learning ideationally and not only as artefact. In Step 2, as in Step 1, not only does this thesis advocate for critical perspectives to contribute to the praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research, but this thesis also uses a critical perspective (Feenberg, 2008) as part of its own methodology. Thus both Step 1 and Step 2 are consistent with the overall message of this thesis for a shift towards socio-cultural inclusiveness when approaching normalized e-learning.

Chapter 3- Universalized Workplace Education

This chapter presents a critical pedagogy perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘equal exchange’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘standardization’ in normalized e-learning. This chapter looks at universalized workplace education and training interventions for workers (hereafter, ‘universalized
workplace education’). Universalized workplace education for workers happens through hypermedia-centric, constructivist-based, normalized e-learning that configures technologies, constructivism, and instructors, all for a knowledge-based workplace. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (pedagogically) standardized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to training consistency. This results in some groups of learners being privileged over others as ‘better’ learners. This bears potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers and their peers and fellow workers (worker-worker alienation).

Normalized e-learning for workplace education and training interventions have evolved over the past decade with respect to the complexities of the educational delivery process. This is especially true given the growing prevalence of information and communication technologies (hereafter, ‘ICTs’). Distance education in the tertiary sector is looked at to see what is revealed from universalized workplace education from normalized e-learning.

This raises questions about normalized e-learning for a global workforce. Normalized e-learning epitomizes a constructivist practice in the workplace; heavily based on European and Western industrialized values; and, remains unconcerned with the socio-culturally specialized adult learning needs and goals of a diverse, global, and multi-facetted cohort of adult learners. Looking primarily at the constructivist turn in distance education, perspectives of epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy are all referenced in relation to this trend.

The universalizing outcomes of this hypermedia-centred, constructivist trend in normalized e-learning for workplace education and training interventions are concerning.
Technique is increasingly used as the omnibus answer for all learners’ needs and goals. ‘Techno-logy’ increasingly replaces epistemology and ontology as the singular perspective for authentic learning. Some of the alienating, socio-cultural, exclusionary, conformist, and coercive effects of technology, constructivism, and instructors are all now problematized for a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce.

Chapter 4- The Knowledge-based Economy and E-learning: Critical Considerations for Workplace Democracy

This chapter presents a critical culture perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘classification and application of rules’ principles of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘categorization’ in normalized e-learning. The ideological shift by nation-states to ‘a knowledge-based economy’ (also referred to as ‘knowledge-based society’) is causing changes in the workplace. At the same time, normalized e-learning is heralded as the 'grand' solution for workplace education and training interventions for a global workforce within this knowledge-based economy. Purveyors and advocates of normalized e-learning boast of ushering in an era of renewed workplace participation and worker empowerment by allowing for any time education and anywhere access to knowledge as defining characteristics of workplace democracy in the knowledge-based economy. However, the expectations bound up with technological enhancements and economic gain result in a normalized e-learning that automatically privileges some types of work as more ‘knowledge-based’ and therefore more valued by the workplace than others. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (culturally) categorized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘economic efficiency’. This bears
potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers and their work (worker-work alienation).

Brought about by the forces of globalization and technological innovation, the ideologies of the 'knowledge-based economy' are not limited to influencing the production, consumption, and economic restructuring of nations, governments, and markets. In this regard, their impact on cultural identity in daily workplace life cannot be underestimated. The growing exposure of the global workforce to normalized e-learning, against the backdrop of knowledge-based ideology, makes it vital to carry out a critical inquiry to consider the future of workplace democracy, education, and empowerment.

The critical considerations for normalized e-learning are found in the defining characteristic of the relationship between the transformation of work, normalized e-learning, and the digital divide. The very same social inequities, such as race, income, ability, and education, which contribute to the digital divide, also: (a) make normalized e-learning attractive to workplaces; and, (b) at the same time, are divisive of workforces. The current perceived infallibility of normalized e-learning seems to ignore entirely the vulnerability and educational needs of the marginal, displaced, non-European, non-Western worker who will populate more and more of the global workforce in the 21st century; a supply of workers that is ever more socially and culturally varied.

The relationship between democratic participation and work and normalized e-learning becomes contradictory and alienated once contextualized by the ideologies of the knowledge-based economy and workplace transformation. Even though workplace democracy, education, and empowerment may all be claimed to be central motivations behind normalized e-learning, there remains a sizeable chasm between normalized e-learning
as an instrument of knowledge-based ideology, and normalized e-learning as a force that promotes socially just work in the workplace. An understanding of this disparity may be invaluable: (a) for social action to sustain the fundamental relevance of workplace democracy, education, and empowerment; (b) to attend to the learning of a displaced, diverse, and globalized cohort of workers anxiously facing their prospects for work; and, (c) in a future replete with knowledge-based, technologized, and digitized workplaces.

Chapter 5- Infallibility of Innovative Artefacts

This chapter presents a critical history perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘optimal effort and calculation of outcomes’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘operationalization’ in normalized e-learning. This chapter discusses the cultural paradigm of ‘innovative artefacts’ in the workplace. This paradigm culturally and discursively shapes e-learning historicity for workplace education and training interventions, resulting in socio-cultural impacts on the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce. As technological proficiency and economic efficiency change over time, so do the attributes of what is a ‘good’ worker. Workers have no choice but to keep up. This privileges (knowledge) workers who are capable of adjusting to and abandoning past operational priorities and embrace current operations as these are the operations that are favoured, normalized, technologically superior, and economically beneficial. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (ahistorically) operationalized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘technological proficiency’. This bears potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers’ personal, cultural-historical identities and their social-rational workplace identities (worker-identity alienation).
A critical history perspective problematizes these relations between technology and technological progress as well as normalized e-learning. The ‘presumption of neutrality’ is highlighted as it influences the shaping of normalized e-learning and its dubious, shifting, and reversible impacts on the workforce. A focused discourse analysis of the connotations and assumptions that have further shaped e-learning programs for the workplace over the past decade illustrate normalized e-learning’s changing emphases over the years, from administrational to associational to artefactual, today.

The technological artefacts of normalized e-learning now deserve closer scrutiny. The similarities and differences between ‘online learning and simulations’, ‘learning objects’, and ‘learning management systems’ are all highlighted as each of these technological artefacts, more often than not, is taken as equivalent to and a substitute for adults’ learning. Driven by technological innovation, a renewed social-rational workplace identity periodically emerges to challenge the personal, cultural-historical identities of the workforce, placing a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce in a constant state of flux, doubt, and disequilibrium with respect to their own sense of voice, subjectivity, and self-efficacy.

With technological innovation and the hardware-software foci, workplace education and training interventions will continue to be assessed by access through hardware and functionality of software. In turn, normalized e-learning will continue to alienate workers’ personal, cultural-historical identities from their social-rational workplace identities. Learning materializes in the hardware and software. All this achieves a conceptualizing of knowledge as capital. ‘Knowledge’ is what is found by accessing hardware. ‘Knowledge’ is what is created through the manipulation of software. The dichotomous knowledge worker, under the yoke of a socially justified and rationalized training in the workplace, is charged
with the responsibility to generate knowledge and then be perpetually separated from their knowledge in an infinite number of ways through socially rationalized standardization, categorization, and operationalization. The more ‘operationally’ separable a knowledge worker becomes from their knowledge, the more socially justified and ‘rationalized’ is their presence in the workplace.

Chapter 6- E-learning Adaptability and Social Responsibility

This chapter presents a critical discourse perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of not accepting e-learning adaptability as a burgeoning social responsibility in the workplace, when thinking about normalized e-learning. E-learning adaptability is presented as one potential framework that may serve as scaffolding for critical perspectives to enable normalized research towards alternate, socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

This chapter brings together some of the elements discussed in previous chapters towards an understanding of how critical perspectives may begin to be applied towards normalized research. By including silenced and marginalized voices in normalized research, formal biases remain in check and normalized e-learning remains ambivalent, underdetermined, and fertile with potential for greater inclusiveness.

In this information age of intense political, social, technological, and environmental upheaval, do organizations bear any social responsibility towards their employees when mandating normalized e-learning? Organizational stakeholders need to be more informed about the needs and complexities of workplace learning for a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce and workplace changes when envisioning the future of normalized e-learning. The focus of attention must move beyond costs, savings, hardware, and software to include the global workforce and their social and cultural learning needs. When thinking
about social and cultural learning needs of a diverse workforce, hardware is not a substitute
for context; software cannot take the place of community; and, instructional design cannot
replace culture. More powerful software and hardware is not the whole answer. They do not
necessarily translate into learning, or accomplishing social responsibility, whilst global
workers’ needs go unresolved.

This chapter argues for e-learning adaptability as a means to attend to social
responsibility towards the global and diverse workforce, when thinking about normalized e-
learning. Accordingly, this chapter discusses: (a) the workforce diversity, and other
workplace changes, that increasingly challenge the current approaches to normalized
research and normalized e-learning; (b) presents an alternate, socio-culturally inclusive,
socially responsible definition of workplace e-learning; and then, (c) highlights the E-
learning Adaptability Framework as one potential framework that may serve as scaffolding
for critical perspectives to enable e-learning adaptability through socio-cultural inclusiveness
research.

Chapter 7-Conclusions

Normalized e-learning is an instrument of social rationality in the modern, rational
workplace. Normalized e-learning, based around a normalizing paradigm of technological
proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency, socially justifies a global and
diverse workforce in the workplace. This social justification happens through formal biases
such as pedagogical standardization, cultural categorization, and ahistorical
operationalization that are inherent in normalized e-learning. At the same time, the social and
cultural learning needs of a global and diverse workforce go unanswered by normalized
research that focuses primarily on technological enhancements and economic gains. All this
results in workforce alienation between: workers and other workers; workers and their work; and, identity-centered alienation, between workers’ cultural-historical versus their social-rational identities.

Socio-cultural inclusiveness research applies critical and emancipatory lenses as scaffolding to enable normalized research towards giving greater voice to silenced and marginalized learners undergoing normalized e-learning. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research attends to the social and cultural learning needs of a diverse workforce. Whereas normalized research decontextualizes workplace e-learning programs around technological enhancements and economic gains, socio-cultural inclusiveness research recontextualizes workplace e-learning programs. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research reintroduces workplace e-learning programs as: (a) an integral part of the broader social activities and cultural identities of workers as social beings in the world; and, (b) an experience that bears social and cultural consequences for workers’ learning that stretch beyond the technology and economics; and, also reach outside of the workplace.

This chapter constructs the taxonomies and frameworks put forth by this thesis for socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Together with the critical perspectives discussed in earlier chapters, these taxonomies and frameworks: (a) integrate the thinking and analysis from all previous chapters; (b) signify a research outline for socio-cultural inclusiveness research; (b) redress social rationality, formal biases, and workforce alienation; and, (d) respond to the marginalizing and exclusionary challenges of normalized research, normalizing paradigms, and the hegemony of the prototypical knowledge worker image, that all currently confront workers as they encounter normalized e-learning.
Table 3 summarizes the analyses in each of the previous four chapters of this thesis and links them with perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to follow.

Table 3

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<th>Chapter and title</th>
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The overwhelming focus on technological enhancements and economic gains in normalized research and normalized e-learning places a global and socio-culturally diverse cohort of adult learners at a democratic disadvantage with respect to addressing their social and cultural learning needs, now and in the future. Future global and diverse workforces will be faced with two unenviable and undemocratic choices: (a) resist normalization in the pursuit of their social and cultural learning needs, and face social marginalization and/or cultural exclusion; or, (b) accept normalization, sacrifice their cultural-historical identity, and chase an ever-elusive, social-rational identity of prototypical knowledge worker.

The perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks put forth in this thesis, lay out a promising research outline for socio-cultural inclusiveness research (Remtulla, 2007, 2009,
Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning

Karim Amirali Remtulla

2010). These perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks for doing research, think about normalized e-learning using a critical and emancipatory lens; give voice to learners; acknowledge the socio-cultural complexities of epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy in adult learning; see e-learning programs in the workplace as democratic spaces and more than just hardware and software; and finally, may lead to the development of alternate approaches and methodologies for doing critical, emancipatory, socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Workplace e-learning programs will factor increasingly into adult education researchers’ and practitioners’ conversations against the backdrop of the anxious voices of the global workforce in the decades yet to come.

Conclusions

Normalized e-learning represents a technological and economic juggernaut, as part of the ongoing reshaping of the workplace and the workforce. A growing reliance on normalized e-learning, as a complete solution based on the goals of technique, cost savings, and efficiencies, is increasingly problematic and socio-culturally alienating. The assumptions of technological enhancements and economic gains, as a substitute for the socio-cultural, remain increasingly inadequate for the social and cultural learning needs of a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce.

Current dominant emphasis on costs, profits, hardware, and software in normalized research result in a marginalizing and exclusionary normalized e-learning for a global and diverse cohort of adult learners. Their socio-cultural learning needs remain under-recognized and unanswered. A socio-culturally closed focus on the technological and economic aspects of normalized e-learning, alone, remains outside the socio-cultural inclusiveness necessary for the learning needs of a diverse, global and dynamic workforce. If the focus in the future
continues towards a greater socio-cultural appreciation of learning in the workplace, and not just the technology, the deficiencies of normalized e-learning leave much to be accomplished when it comes to cultural differences; ethics; and, bearing social responsibility towards a global and diverse workforce and their workplace e-learning experiences.

Research that begins with the socio-cultural and considers how broader social changes interact with workers, and their local organizations’ experiences of normalized e-learning, will prove increasingly necessary. The importance and necessity of broaching normalized e-learning as an idea or discourse, and not as just a technological artefact or economic target, now becomes clearer. Any adult education research of normalized e-learning, to be relevant, meaningful, and applicable to a global cohort of workers, must possess the capacity to recognize socio-cultural changes in society, and the social responsibilities that emerge as part of that society’s workplace education and training interventions. Given the social changes currently characterizing modern workspaces, such a limited perspective on the technological and economic aspects of normalized e-learning (as a ‘complete’ understanding) is lacking. A cultural exclusion and social marginalization inevitably result from such thinking in the workplace.

What will become imperative for socio-cultural inclusiveness in the decades to come is the vital and crucial role of socio-cultural inclusiveness research, to place in check the burgeoning dominance of the progress in technological and economic foci of normalized research. This thesis, by presenting an argument for socio-cultural inclusiveness research and laying out taxonomies and frameworks for critical perspectives on normalized e-learning, contributes towards the redressing of the alienation caused by normalized e-learning and contributes to social justice in the workplace. The taxonomies and corresponding frameworks
that are put forward in this thesis strive to give these silenced adult learner cohorts a voice through socio-cultural inclusiveness research. In so doing, the hope is to empower a global and socio-culturally diverse cohort of adult learners that will increasingly come to comprise the workforces of the 21st century.
References

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CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY
This chapter discusses the methodology of this thesis. Even though this thesis makes a theoretical contribution, methodology is still relevant. It speaks to how the subject of workplace e-learning programs may be approached and understood differently in the research process, so that socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘socio-cultural inclusiveness research’) becomes more possible.

Methodology is addressed in two steps. In Step 1, Gee’s (2005) approach to Discourse Analysis is used to analyze passages from normalized research of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalized research’) that has been published over the past decade. This is done to understand what normalizing paradigm of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalizing paradigm’) shapes normalized workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalized e-learning’) and how such a normalizing paradigm might lead to marginalizing and excluding some groups in the workplace through normalized e-learning.

The identification of a normalizing paradigm in Step 1, along with the normalizing paradigm’s exclusionary and marginalizing assumptions, establishes a need for critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to enable more socio-cultural inclusiveness research. However, Step 1 does not represent a rigorous, extensive, empirical study. Instead, Step 1 is better understood as a cursory, exploratory analysis with limited transferability and idiographic generalizability (these issues will be discussed later in this chapter).

Step 2 introduces Feenberg’s (2008) critique of social rationality as an interpretive and conceptual framework (Biklen & Casella, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). First, as an interpretive framework, Step 2 shows how principles of social rationality are inscribed into
the normalizing paradigm, and how normalized e-learning signifies rational, modern society with all of its systemic biases. In so doing, this interpretation also: (a) brings to light the socio-culturally alienating implications on the workforce of normalized e-learning; and, (b) identifies the relevant critical perspectives to redress alienation through socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Three critical perspectives emerge as relevant: critical pedagogy; critical culture; and, critical history. Next, this chapter takes Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as a conceptual framework to focus the arguments in the remaining chapters of Step 2 (that is, Chapters 3, 4, and 5). Now that critical perspectives are identified, designing taxonomies and frameworks may begin.

Main Question

Recall the main question of this thesis:

What critical perspectives may be put forward to assist socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs?

This thesis approaches socio-cultural inclusiveness research in two steps:

1. Using Gee’s (2005) Discourse Analysis as approach, conducts a cursory analysis of normalized research over the past decade to identify any recurrent, normalizing paradigm and how it discursively constructs normalized e-learning.

Step 1

Discourse Analysis is applied as a socio-cultural approach to ten passages that have been extracted from normalized research published over the past decade to explore whether a normalizing paradigm is noticeable.

Step 1 establishes the need for critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks that promote socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Step 1 considers whether normalized research, and its dominant foci of technological enhancements and economic gains, perpetuates a normalizing paradigm. The relevance of Step 1 speaks to the praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. For research of workplace e-learning programs to become more socio-cultural, exclusionary and marginalizing paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) must first be identified.

Step 1 accomplishes this in two ways. Firstly, Step 1 undertakes socio-cultural inclusiveness research by using a socio-culturally oriented approach (Discourse Analysis). This is consistent with the overall message of the thesis. Secondly, Step 1 also gives insight into how a normalizing paradigm might silence workers’ social and cultural learning needs by bringing about normalized e-learning. However, Step 1 does not represent a rigorous, extensive, empirical study. Instead, Step 1 is better understood as a cursory, exploratory analysis with limited transferability and idiographic generalizability (these issues will be discussed later in this chapter).

Discourse Analysis as a ‘Socio-cultural’ Approach

This thesis looks to Gee’s (2005) approach to Discourse Analysis as a socio-culturally oriented approach to analyze normalized research. Gee (2005) refers to his approach to Discourse Analysis as a theory and method of analyzing ‘language-in-use’. According to Gee
“language has meaning only in and through social practices” (Gee, 2005, p. 8). This approach to analyzing talk and text “considers how language, whether written or spoken, enacts social and cultural [italics added] perspectives and identities” (Gee, 2005, p. i).

There are several qualities that make Gee’s (2005) approach to language-in-use an insightful socio-cultural approach for analyzing normalized research. Firstly, for Gee (2005), language not only supports the performance of social identities and activities, but language also enables affiliation for people with particular social groups and cultural institutions. These functions of language are interconnected. Social groups and cultural institutions are all continuously refreshed, perpetuated, and validated by the very activities and identities that they inspire.

Secondly, language-in-use has a reciprocal quality in that it creates and brings into being that which it describes. This reciprocal quality of language is identified by Gee (2005) as ‘reflexivity’:

Which comes first? The situation or the language? This question reflects an important reciprocity between language and ‘reality’: language simultaneously reflects reality (‘in terms of the way things are’) and constructs (construes) it to be a certain way…. ‘reflexivity’ (in the sense of language and context being like two mirrors facing each other and constantly and endlessly reflecting their own images back and forth between each other). (p. 97)

Thirdly, given this reflexive quality of language, Gee’s (2005) approach to analyzing talk and text sees language-in-use as a tool to socially and culturally ‘build reality’. Through talk and text (that is, language-in-use), a discursive process of socially and culturally
constructing reality happens. Language-in-use accomplishes this social and cultural construction of reality around issues, institutions, people, and events in seven ways:

1. Activities: enacting social activities.
2. Connections: forming cultural connections, associations, and affiliations.
3. Identities: invoking cultural identities.
4. Politics: justifying the distribution of social goods.
5. Relationships: establishing social relationships.
7. Signs and symbols: promoting cultural signs and symbols.

Lastly, Gee (2005) bases his approach to analyzing language-in-use around a ‘pattern recognition’ view of the mind. According to this view, the mind essentially works by “storing experiences and then finding patterns in those experiences” (Gee, 2005, p. 53). The mind is thus a pattern recognizer when it comes to discursively building reality through activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, significance, and signs and symbols. These are patterns that are “flexibly transformable” and “extracted from experience” (Gee, 2005, p. 66). Certain discursive patterns appear repeatedly by way of language-in-use to socio-culturally construct reality. These discursive patterns serve as cues and clues for the pattern recognizing mind. By recognizing certain, recurring discursive patterns from language-in-use, the mind comprehends reality as delimited to and defined by these specialized discursive patterns.

These four qualities make Gee’s (2005) approach to analyzing language-in-use a trustworthy approach for this thesis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gee, 2005; Goodman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This approach to analyzing talk and text provides a more socio-cultural analysis of normalized research than would other Discourse Analysis approaches to
language that may emphasize other issues, such as: social attitudes and cultural identities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); power (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Fairclough, 2003); social epistemology and group processes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); or, conversation analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000). With Gee’s (2005) integration of the cognitive, social, institutional, and cultural, his approach speaks authentically to the main question of this thesis, for socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

Gee’s (2005) approach to analyzing language-in-use especially works for this thesis when seeking out a normalizing paradigm and analyzing the connection between discursively repeating this normalizing paradigm and making normalized e-learning a social and cultural reality. A normalizing paradigm, according to Gee (2005), ‘builds’ certain acceptable ways of being and learning (that is, normalized e-learning) in the workplace that are defined as ‘normal’, outside of which others are identified as ‘abnormal’. The pattern recognizing mind understands this normalizing paradigm as reality.

This ‘reality’ that emerges from a normalizing paradigm carries real consequences for workplace e-learning vendors; researchers; adult learners; and, adult education practitioners. Those who affirm this normalizing paradigm, and fit the patterns of acceptable identities and activities associated with normalized e-learning, are welcomed by social and cultural communities in their workplace. Such individuals are seen as allies and contributing positively to social stability and ‘building’ cultural affinity. Those whose social and cultural needs and behaviours fall outside of this normalizing paradigm, and who may not be (able or capable) of fitting into normalized e-learning, are construed as weak; ‘not building’ a stronger and more able workforce; and, working against a culturally affirming workplace.
'Discourse model’ as a Tool of Inquiry

Gee’s (2005) theory and method of language-in-use also comes with certain ‘tools of inquiry’ to be applied as “‘thinking devices’ that guide inquiry with specific sorts of data and specific sorts of issues and questions” (p. 7). These tools of inquiry are applied to language-in-use to recognize how the seven building tasks construct reality for individuals, groups, and institutions, and the social, cultural, and political consequences of that reality.

To be able to identify a normalizing paradigm in normalized research, this thesis applies only one tool or ‘thinking device’ from Gee’s (2005) repertoire. This tool is called ‘Discourse model’ (for a fuller discussion of all tools of inquiry see Gee (2005, pp. 20-93)).

Discourse models are:

‘theories’ (storylines, images, explanatory frameworks) that people hold, often unconsciously, and use to make sense of the world and their experiences in it. They are always oversimplified, an attempt to capture some main elements and background subtleties, in order to allow us to act in the world without having to think overtly about everything all at once. In this sense, they are like stereotypes, though we should keep in mind that all theories, even overt theories in science, are simplifications of reality that are meant to help us understand complicated realities by focusing on important things and leaving out some of the details. (Gee, 2005, p. 61)

Gee (2005) explains that, especially where adults are concerned, Discourse models provide heuristic, taken-for-granted assumptions about what is socially normal and culturally representative. Discourse models present basic explanations for patterns that appear complex in reality so that a ‘cause-effect’ relationship can be discerned. Discourse models form part of social practices that are shared among members of social groups and provide a common
and communal explanation to certain patterns that shape social interaction and cultural meanings. Discourse models also serve as the glue that links local actions and social practices with larger cultural institutions and social movements.

Since Discourse models are shared simplifications, they often contain (by definition) trivializing and disparaging assumptions about people who are not members of ‘the same’ social groups or those who identify ‘other’ cultural identities or institutions. Such assumptions often translate into antisocial attitudes and behaviours towards those conceived as ‘other’ or ‘not the same’. In this way, Discourse models are laden with rationalization and justification. Using the notion of ‘bachelor’ as an example of the exclusionary and marginalizing assumptions inherent in Discourse models, Gee (2005) elaborates:

In the case of ‘bachelor’ we are actually excluding people such as gay individuals and priests as ‘normal’ men, and assuming that men come in two ‘normal’ types: those who get married early and those who get married late. This assumption, of course, marginalizes people who do not want to get married or who do not want to marry people of the opposite sex. It is part of the function of Discourse models to set up what count as central, typical cases and what count as marginal, non-typical cases. (p. 72)

Discourse models thus impose rudimentary explanations on certain discourse patterns recognized by the mind; and, project a simplified (but predetermined) explanation and outcome of what is normal, typical, and acceptable. The challenge is that what is normal and acceptable varies across different social groups and cultural associations. When held by a social group in the majority, Discourse models result in marginalization and exclusion of those in the minority. In this way, hegemony is sustained when more powerful groups impose
Discourse models on less powerful groups and encourage less powerful groups to participate in their own oppression.

By applying Discourse model as a tool of inquiry on normalized research, a discourse pattern may emerge (in the form of a Discourse model) that functions as a normalizing paradigm. Such a normalizing paradigm, by way of discursive repetition, pattern recognition, and reflexivity of language-in-use, brings about normalized e-learning. Discourse model is a trustworthy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gee, 2005; Goodman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) tool of inquiry given the objectives of this thesis to discover normalizing paradigms, as well as the socially and culturally alienating implications of normalized e-learning on the workforce.

_A Discourse model of normalized workplace e-learning programs._

Given the dominant foci of technological enhancements and economic gains in normalized research, a (simplified) Discourse model of normalized workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘Discourse model of normalized e-learning’) likely contains (at most) three basic assumptions: (a) technological proficiency; (b) economic efficiency; and, (c) training consistency. For this thesis:

1. ‘Training consistency’ refers to normalized e-learning’s ability to be as good as, if not better than, real world work experiences and beneficial to developing skills and competencies necessary for work.

2. ‘Technological proficiency’ refers to normalized e-learning’s ability to utilize advanced technologies, whether hardware or software, to provide improved workplace education and training.
3. ‘Economic efficiency’ refers to normalized e-learning’s ability to provide a return on investment, in terms of cost savings and/or increased revenues.

Figure 1 illustrates a Discourse model of normalized e-learning.
Figure 1. A Discourse model of normalized e-learning.
Data

How passages were analysed.

Recall from the Introduction, that e-learning programs for workplace education and training interventions, as we recognize them today, are just over a decade old (Downes, 2005; Honey, 2001). Recall also from the Introduction, that two central interests of ‘technological enhancements’ and ‘economic gains’ preoccupy current workplace e-learning research that has been put forward by governments, industry, and academia over the past decade (Bell, Kanar, & Kozlowski, 2008; Galagan, 2001; Industry Canada, 2005; Pollitt, 2005; Sims, 2008; SkillSoft, 2006).

For Step 1, ten passages have been extracted from ten examples of normalized research publications (that is, one passage from each publication). These publications approximately cover a ten year period from 2000 to 2009.

The passages are listed alphabetically, based on the first author’s last name. Each passage is preceded by author-date-page citations (full citations may be found at the end of this chapter in the References section) and brief background information about each publication. Only complete paragraph(s) are included in each passage. Each passage comprises at most two complete paragraphs. The start of each new paragraph is preceded by the label: [new paragraph]. The end of each paragraph is followed by the label: [end paragraph].

Each paragraph has also been subdivided into ‘Stanzas’. Each Stanza reflects one consistent theme (Gee, 2005) that is representative of one of the three assumptions comprising the Discourse model of normalized e-learning illustrated in Figure 1 (that is, either technological proficiency, economic efficiency, or training consistency). Stanzas need
not be grammatically correct or complete sentences to be ideationally and thematically consistent with the Discourse model of normalized e-learning from Figure 1.
Example 1.

Bell et al. (2008, p. 1416) talk about simulation-based training. They review the theory and research on simulations as training instruments and call for a specific agenda for theory-driven research:

a) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   [new paragraph] The increased prevalence of simulations is due, in part, to the many potential benefits they offer as a training medium. Like other types of distributed learning systems, simulations allow training to occur almost anywhere and anytime, and this flexibility can be used.

b) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

   to reduce or eliminate many of the variable costs associated with traditional training, such as classrooms and instructors (Summers 2004).

c) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   Simulations also possess unique features that create

d) *Stanza (training consistency)*

   the potential for instructional benefits

e) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   not offered by other instructional mediums. For example, simulations can be used to create a synthetic- or micro-world that immerses
f) **Stanza (training consistency)**

trainees in a realistic experience and exposes them to important contextual characteristics of the domain (Schiflett, Elliott, Salas and Coover 2004).

g) **Stanza (technological proficiency)**

Simulations can also be used

h) **Stanza (training consistency)**

as realistic practice environments for tasks that are too dangerous to be practiced in the real world or to provide opportunities for practice on tasks that occur infrequently (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers in press) [end paragraph].
Example 2.

Haland and Tjora (2006, p. 995) present a case study of the implementation of a learning management system at Statoil, a Norwegian-based oil and gas conglomerate. The rationale for Statoil to undertake this project is put this way:

a) **Stanza (technological proficiency)**

   [new paragraph] One major argument for Statoil’s implementation of a learning portal is

b) **Stanza (training consistency)**

   its extensive catalogue of courses,

c) **Stanza (technological proficiency)**

   with a difficult user interface. The objective of the new learning portal is to make it easier for the employees to participate in the courses,

d) **Stanza (training consistency)**

   through giving an overview of relevant courses

e) **Stanza (economic efficiency)**

   for any employee regardless of particular job or position,

f) **Stanza (technological proficiency)**

   and making it easier to sign up for, or withdraw from, courses. The implementation of the learning portal has in this sense been ‘a tidying-up process
g) *Stanza (training consistency)*

within a noisy and confusing collection of courses’, as one of the informants put it.

h) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

Via the learning portal it should be easier

i) *Stanza (training consistency)*

for the employees to get an overview of their own competence, and of what kind of courses might be of personal relevance, and then plan their own competence development [end paragraph].
Example 3.

Galagan (2001, p. 48) describes the experiences of Cisco, one of the world’s largest suppliers of networking technologies for the Internet. Here is how Mike Metz, director of marketing for the Internet Learning Solutions Group at Cisco, worded Cisco’s reasons for implementing workplace e-learning programs:

a) *Stanza (training consistency)*

[new paragraph] The first is obvious: the more people learning

b) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

online, the more networking gear

c) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

Cisco can sell. The second is that Cisco has big plans for growth

d) *Stanza (training consistency)*

and, consequently, has big learning needs.

e) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

In 12 years, it has become an $18 billion company; in the next four years, it intends to grow to a $50 billion dollar company [end paragraph].
Example 4.

Harun (2002, p. 303) presents research on the TeleHealth Initiative in Malaysia. This initiative works towards integration of workplace e-learning programs into a healthcare setting, and into the daily routine of medical and healthcare professionals:

a) Stanza (economic efficiency)

[new paragraph] K-economy is the buzzword today. In such a global knowledge economy, people have been identified as the key for success of organisations and businesses. To thrive in such an economy, organisations and businesses need to recruit, retain,

b) Stanza (training consistency)

and update highly skilled people. E-learning has been identified as the enabler for people and organisations to keep up

c) Stanza (economic efficiency)

with changes in the global economy

d) Stanza (technological proficiency)

that now occur in Internet time.

e) Stanza (economic efficiency)

As companies, organisations, and governments around the globe look for more efficient,
f) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

dynamic ways

g) *Stanza (training consistency)*

to update workforce skills and knowledge,

h) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

e-learning is emerging as one of the fastest organisational uses of the Internet. E-

learning has the advantage

i) *Stanza (training consistency)*

of being applicable across all areas of workforce training including career
development training, new employee orientation, new service or product
information, or just updating and upgrading of work knowledge, competencies,
and skills. By leveraging training and learning

j) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

over the Internet,

k) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

organisations can eliminate the need for classroom time, dramatically reducing
costs

l) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

and improving real time access to information (Future of Corporate Learning, 2001) [end paragraph].
Example 5.

The next example comes from Industry Canada, the department of the Federal Government of Canada that deals with competition, growth of industries, and innovation across all sectors of the Canadian economy. Here, Industry Canada (2005, p.2) studies Canada’s education and training industry:

a) Stanza (training consistency)

[new paragraph] Skill requirements keep rising

b) Stanza (economic efficiency)

across all sectors of the economy. Business and government are placing considerable emphasis

c) Stanza (training consistency)

on the importance of skills upgrading

d) Stanza (economic efficiency)

to economic prosperity and innovation [end paragraph].

e) Stanza (training consistency)

[new paragraph] As Canada’s training system expands to meet the needs of learners,
f) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

there will be new opportunities for Canadian suppliers of education and training services. At the same time, training providers are under increasing pressure to deliver measurable results that will have a positive impact on individual and organizational performance [end paragraph].

g) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

[new paragraph] The rapid adoption of new technologies is having a profound impact on the education industry. Canada’s world-class telecommunications infrastructure has enabled Canadian training service providers and multimedia companies to work with content suppliers to build leading-edge e-learning applications. Learners can access training through technologies that use the Internet, e-mail, CD ROMs, DVDs, and satellite and cable TV [end paragraph].
Example 6.

Lim, Ripley, and O’Steen (2009, p. 212) conducted a cross-national qualitative study of tertiary instructors from Canada, United States, and New Zealand regarding effective e-learning instructional design. They state the following:

a) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

[New paragraph] Organizations have adopted e-learning

b) *Stanza (training consistency)*

to develop their workforce for several reasons. Among these, e-learning is believed to: (a) expand learning opportunities for the workplace;

c) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

(b) allow anytime and anywhere learning;

d) *Stanza (training consistency)*

(c) promote self-directed learning

e) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

with learner’s control of learning process; and (d) facilitate timely performance support (Dam 2004). When considering best practices in e-learning, critical factors would obviously include whether selected methods are both

f) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

efficient in using the organizational resources
g) *Stanza (training consistency)*

and effective in achieving educational goals and values. A major issue for this study was determining the perceptions of tertiary instructors with regard to the effectiveness factor.

h) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

The authors suspect, but did not set out to verify, that the methods in use by participants were put in place by their institutions with due regard for the efficiency factor [end paragraph].
Example 7.

Olafsen and Centindamar (2005, p. 332) discuss their case study of the implementation of an e-learning system by Expert Norway AS, a European, consumer electronics retailer with locations in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Estonia. Their goal was to increase front-line employees’ knowledge about the firm’s values:

a) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   [new paragraph] An organisation giving high priority to e-learning should provide its employees/learners with enough information about the application, give them access in terms of time and technology,

b) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

   and supply incentives primarily appealing to their internal motivation.

c) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   A precondition before any implementation

d) *Stanza (training consistency)*

   is the commitment of company executives

e) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

   at early stages of the implementation.

f) *Stanza (training consistency)*

   It is hard to change an organisational culture if executives are ignorant or even hostile to changes.
g) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

As with all new technology, it takes time and effort to maximise the effects and benefits of technology.

h) *Stanza (training consistency)*

In our case, the e-learning project was a ‘first-time’ experience for most learners and the organisation.

i) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

The challenge is to find the best way of transferring the content

j) *Stanza (training consistency)*

according to the needs of the organisation and using a good mix of learning methods. A continuous and holistic approach to learning and training, combining and utilising the strengths of traditional

k) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

and e-learning methods,

l) *Stanza (training consistency)*

will probably increase individual and organisational learning [end paragraph].
Example 8.

Pollitt (2005, p. 19) presents a synopsised case study of the implementation of workplace e-learning programs at Cable and Wireless, an international telecommunications giant located in London, United Kingdom. Cable and Wireless also operates businesses in the Caribbean, Panama, Macau and Monaco & Islands:

a) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

[new paragraph] International telecommunications company Cable & Wireless estimates

b) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

that using e-learning

c) *Stanza (training consistency)*

in critical business and information-technology skills for its employees

d) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

worldwide

e) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

has cost about 80 percent less than the equivalent instructor-led training [end paragraph].

[new paragraph] As well as cutting costs,

f) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

Cable & Wireless believes that the system is helping
g) *Stanza (training consistency)*

to raise the level of knowledge within the organization.

h) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

E-learning enables employees to dip freely

i) *Stanza (training consistency)*

into the training

j) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

so they can quickly

k) *Stanza (training consistency)*

update and refresh their skills,

l) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

which means they are continuously equipped

m) *Stanza (training consistency)*

with the knowledge

n) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

to help the company to move forward in a difficult market [end paragraph].
Example 9.

SkillSoft, one of the world’s largest suppliers of workplace e-learning systems, conducted a benchmark study. This study compared and contrasted employers’ views (senior Human Resources executives from 16 global corporations) with employees’ views (approximately 5,400 full-time employees from across the United Kingdom) around learning needs. Here is the wording of the final paragraphs in the Conclusion section (SkillSoft, 2006, p. 19):

a) Stanza (economic efficiency)

[new paragraph] If you are limited by resources,

b) Stanza (training consistency)

draw upon those you trust in your supplier base. If you are restricted by the creativity of those around you, look for ideas and best practice within other organisations.

c) Stanza (economic efficiency)

And if you are challenged by budget issues, remember that an investment

d) Stanza (technological proficiency)

in learning technology

e) Stanza (economic efficiency)

can not only save your organisation money,

f) Stanza (training consistency)

but can train more people, in greater depth,
g) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

across more locations than can ever be possible using traditional training methods

[end paragraph].

[new paragraph] So, if you haven’t already done so, embrace all that technology has to offer,

h) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

demonstrate the immense value

i) *Stanza (training consistency)*

that learning and development can bring, and make a significant difference to the skills base of your business [end paragraph].
Example 10.

Wild, Griggs, and Downing (2002, p. 373) talk about the benefits of e-learning for organizations pursuing knowledge management. They present their research and a theoretical framework for deploying e-learning as a tool for knowledge management:

a) Stanza (technological proficiency)

E-learning’s potential benefits

b) Stanza (economic efficiency)

to business are numerous. Companies are seeking

c) Stanza (technological proficiency)

the kind of easily accessible, highly flexible training that e-learning can deliver

d) Stanza (economic efficiency)

in order to contend with the rapid pace of change in business and shorter product cycles. One of the most obvious benefits to e-learning is the economic advantage from not having to fly employees to attend expensive seminars and thus lose important work time. According to Hicks (2000), companies can save up to 70 per cent of their training budget when instituting e-learning courses within their firms

[end paragraph].

e) Stanza (technological proficiency)

In addition, e-learning personalizes the learning experience and allows for greater flexibility.
f) *Stanza (training consistency)*

Employees can take courses around their schedules and at their own pace while maintaining a consistency of material with their fellow workers.

g) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

Through online training, companies increase the likelihood of getting

h) *Stanza (training consistency)*

training to employees

i) *Stanza (technological proficiency)*

wherever they live and work

j) *Stanza (economic efficiency)*

and, as a result, retain valuable employees longer.

k) *Stanza (training consistency)*

Perhaps the greatest arguments [*sic*] for e-learning are the findings comparing e-learning to more formal training programs. Findings at this point show e-learning produces greater retention of material. According to Webster’s (2001) study, e-learning students have 60 per cent faster learning curves compared to classroom counterparts [end paragraph].
Discussion

Normalization through language-in-use.

Recall Gee’s (2005) notion of the reflexivity of language-in-use, that language performs social activities and identities; and, that language-in-use “simultaneously reflects and constructs the situation or context in which it is used” (Gee, 2005, p. 97). The Discourse model of normalized e-learning that emerges from the above examples, socially and culturally constructs normalized e-learning as the conflation of technological proficiency; economic efficiency; as well as, training consistency. In so doing, it also functions as a normalizing paradigm. The pattern recognizing mind regards this normalizing paradigm as reality.

Table 1 illustrates this discursive process of the social and cultural construction of normalized e-learning from the normalizing paradigm found in normalized research. (The two columns in Table 1 are identical (accept for column headings) by intention to visually make the point of reflexivity of language-in-use.)

Table 1
Reflexivity of Language-in-use: From Normalizing Paradigm to Normalized E-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normalizing paradigm in normalized research</th>
<th>Normalized e-learning from normalizing paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training consistency</td>
<td>Training consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technological proficiency.

The term ‘e-learning’ consists of two elements. The ‘e’ is garnering the majority of the debate so far. This dominant, technical focus of normalized research concentrates almost exclusively on hardware and software as sufficient responses to the learning needs of the
This contains both culturally exclusionary and socially marginalizing assumptions. To take for granted that a normalized research focus on hardware and software are unanimously and consistently valued by different cultures from around the world is not only ethnocentric, but also arguably short-sighted, and ill-advised. More and better technological apparatuses for normalized e-learning are not de facto the best and only response to the challenges presented by diverse learning needs. As cases in point, North American distance education is internet-based. Japan relies on satellite broadcasting. China continues the trend of using traditional broadcasting media. In the Philippines, cell phones are now being mandated (Baggaley, 2008).

SkillSoft, an e-learning provider, conducted a study by interviewing some 200 employees from 16 participating firms located in 14 different countries across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Baldwin-Evans, 2004). When employees were questioned about barriers to e-learning, 50% indicated time constraints as their major hindrance; 47% mentioned a fear of technology and suspicion about e-learning; 41% cited self-motivation; and, 33% alluded to a lack of management support. Such challenges may not be so easily overcome with technological proficiency.

An over emphasis on hardware and software may not answer to the social and cultural learning needs of a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. Based on some of the responses from the SkillSoft study (Baldwin-Evans, 2004) discussed above, technological proficiency may actually exacerbate employees’ anxieties about normalized e-learning (Honey, 2001; Parrish, 2004). Yet the obverse is the
received wisdom from technocentric, normalized research, where the technological presumably and unproblematically supersedes the socio-cultural. The Discourse model of normalized e-learning in normalized research maintains that: technological proficiency and normalized e-learning are synonymous.

_Economic efficiency._

Numerous events and collaborative initiatives, whether in terms of public policy setting, community-university partnerships, or public sector-private sector programs, have been initiated over the past decade in an effort to bring workplace e-learning programs to as many of the global workforce as possible. In North America, one of the watershed events, known as ‘The Commission on Technology and Adult Learning’, took place February 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2000. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the National Governor’s Association (NGA) convened a forum for participants from government, industry, and tertiary education. This gathering included business leaders; labour representatives; postsecondary education administrators; state and federal government bureaucrats; and, experts from the field of technology and learning.

The premise for this coming together was to discuss how best to combine efforts to promote workplace e-learning programs within the United States’ workforces. The ultimate goal rested with bringing e-learning programs into more workplaces in the United States. This would be accomplished through public and private policies and projects that would support the existing education and training system in the United States, as well as provide incentives for public-private sector collaborative ventures in workplace e-learning research and technologies in general.
Three economic priorities emerged from this forum that applied equally to stakeholders in the public and private sectors (Pantazis, 2002). The first priority was the need for high quality e-learning experiences. This included quality information for consumers; support for workers to take advantage of the right workplace e-learning choices; quality assurance; and, privacy protection. The second priority set was the need for new methods and measures for assessment and certification. Outcome-based instruments and electronic tracking systems were the focus in this regard. The third priority advocated for the requirement of widespread and reasonable access to e-learning opportunities. The importance of investments in telecommunications infrastructure and connectivity as a national priority were called for here. Such economic priorities persist and continue to define much of the efforts surrounding e-learning programs research for workplace education and training interventions in North America, and to some extent, the Western and European industrialized regions.

These priorities also contain culturally exclusionary and socially marginalizing assumptions. Almost a decade later, these priorities have resulted in normalized research that focuses on cost efficiencies and economic returns as paramount. This says very little about what is socially or culturally relevant for a diverse workforce’s learning needs. Yet the Discourse model of normalized e-learning in normalized research maintains that: normalized e-learning is consistently cost efficient and/or profitable for the workplace.

*Training consistency.*

Normalized research predominantly considers costs, profits, hardware, and software as equivalent to training consistency with respect to normalized e-learning. Such research holds that cost efficient hardware and profit driven software is enough to answer to the
diverse learning needs of the present and future workforce and their ‘natural’ desire for performance improvement.

This too contains socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary assumptions. Improvements in technology are not necessarily sensitive to social learning needs based on differences in workers’ race, gender, age, ability, language, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Parrish, 2004). Economic efficiency is not universally culturally valued as a learning motivation or learning outcome by all workers (Honey, 2001). Such cultural learning needs may be more influenced by various communities where workers have membership, as well as the various institutions that workers affiliate and associate themselves with, whether these institutions are social, economic, political, religious, professional, or artistic in purpose. Yet the Discourse model of normalized e-learning in normalized research maintains that: normalized e-learning optimizes training consistency for all workers, equally.

Table 2 heuristically summarizes how, by repeatedly using the Discourse model of normalized e-learning (that is, a normalizing paradigm), normalized research discursively constructs normalized e-learning. Borrowing from the ten examples above, this table shows how the seven building tasks of language-in-use (Gee, 2005) socially and culturally construct normalized e-learning.
Table 2

Discourse model of Normalized E-learning: Normalization through Language-in-use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normalization through language-in-use</th>
<th>Discourse model of normalized e-learning/Normalizing paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs and symbols</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limited transferability and idiographic generalizability.

Step 1 is not intended as an extensive and rigorous empirical study of the domain of normalized research publications. The ten examples from above represent a highly delimited and purposive sample (Ainsworth, 2001) from which to: (a) identify the presence of a Discourse model of normalized e-learning; and then, (b) accept the function of this Discourse model as a normalizing paradigm. This means that some mention must be made to the issues of ‘transferability’ when it comes to the Discourse model of normalized e-learning; and, ‘generalizability’ with respect to the functioning of the Discourse model as a normalizing paradigm (Goodman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Is the Discourse model transferable? The choice of using ‘one passage per publication’ (as opposed to entire articles or complete monographs) places limitations on the findings of this cursory analysis with respect to ‘transferability’ of the Discourse model of normalized e-learning across the domain of normalized research publications. For a passage to be chosen for inclusion in the analysis, all three assumptions (that is, technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency) must each be present in the
passage, and appear in close proximity to each other (that is, within the same or adjacent paragraphs), to be ‘acknowledged’ as a Discourse model of normalized e-learning.

Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine divergent and even contradictory Discourse models of normalized e-learning across the domain of normalized research publications. In some cases, conflicting or more complex Discourse models of normalized e-learning may even be present in the same publication. It is just that those passages were not included in the analysis either to: (a) keep the focus of this analysis on the simplest form of Discourse model of normalized e-learning (that is, with at most three assumptions); or, (b) were overlooked entirely due to human error. It is also possible to interpret some Stanzas as being consistent with more than one assumption in the Discourse model of normalized e-learning.

To mitigate this limitation, the passages included in this analysis were extracted from normalized research publications that met the following criteria:

1. Published within the last decade (2000-2009).
2. Sourced from websites, scholarly journals, or trade periodicals.
3. Represent regions including North America, Asia, or Europe.
4. Commissioned by governments; vendors; or, academia.
5. Use of research methods and techniques such as surveys, case studies, or theoretical contributions.
6. Involve either experts or end-users as research participants (except for theoretical contributions).
7. Utilize sites in industries such as education, healthcare, retail, telecommunications, or automotive sectors.
8. Focus on areas of specialization such as policy, implementations, instructional design, or research and development.

The relevance of setting the above criteria is that once a common and recurring Discourse model of normalized e-learning does emerge from these passages, such a Discourse model may be transferable to a limited proportion of normalized research publications. Thus, the Discourse model of normalized e-learning emerging in Step 1 does have a limited transferability to at least those normalized research publications that fit (most of) the eight criteria above.

Is the Discourse model generalizable as a normalizing paradigm? The choice of using a small, purposive sample places limitations on the findings of this cursory analysis with respect to the ‘generalizability’ of the functioning of the Discourse model of normalized e-learning as a normalizing paradigm across the domain of normalized research publications.

When undertaking Discourse Analysis in studies of talk and text, generalizability is frequently accepted as the identification of repetitive ‘discursive strategies’ (Gee, 2005; Goodman, 2008; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2000). Discursive strategies according to Goodman (2008) are commonly occurring rhetorical devices used in text and talk to accomplish a similar social action across different contexts. (From this point onward, the terms ‘rhetorical device’, ‘discursive strategy’, and ‘discursive pattern’ are used interchangeably and are accepted as synonymous for the purposes of this chapter.) Goodman (2008) discusses five conditions for discursive patterns to be considered generalizable:

1. Accomplishment of certain discursive strategy.
2. Accomplishment in a range of discourse settings.
3. Brings about the same accomplishment in each setting.
4. Used by range of speakers/authors in a range of contexts to bring about the same accomplishment.

The discursive pattern that emerges in Step 1 is a Discourse model of normalized e-learning (with limited transferability). The fact that Step 1 uses a small, purposive sample is not conclusive for Discourse Analysis when it comes to assigning generalizability (Ainsworth, 2001; Biklen & Casella, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gee, 2005; Goodman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2000). What is significant for generalizability in Discourse Analysis is the transferability (that is, repetition) of the Discourse model, however limited. Accordingly, this thesis follows Goodman’s (2008) recommendations:

- it is not necessary to collect an unmanageable data corpus…to show how discourse analytic findings can be generalizable….I will show how one rhetorical device…can be seen to occur in a number of contexts to the same end. This is one example of what I have described as a generalizable action performed by a rhetorical strategy. (p. 268)

Even with limited transferability, the recurrence of the same Discourse model of normalized e-learning across different passages, is acceptable as a normalizing paradigm for the purposes of this thesis (that is, a ‘generalizable action’ as according to Goodman (2008)). The Discourse model of normalized e-learning emerging in Step 1 does function as a normalizing paradigm with *idiographic generalizability* (Sandelowski as cited in Goodman, 2008). Such generalizability likely extends to those normalized research publications that contain at least one repetition of the identical Discourse model of normalized e-learning from Figure 1.
The critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to be forwarded by this thesis for socio-cultural inclusiveness research, depend to some extent on: (a) the identification of a transferable Discourse model of normalized e-learning in these passages; as well as, (b) its functioning as a generalizable, normalizing paradigm. Despite the limited transferability and idiographic generalizability of findings in Step 1, these findings do provide for a wider understanding of the issue of normalizing paradigms in normalized research and their social and cultural construction of normalized e-learning. This further suggests that the findings from Step 1 are sufficient to warrant the need for critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to respond to normalized e-learning (and its culturally exclusionary and socially marginalizing assumptions for the workforce) with socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

What about workers?

The importance and necessity for reflexivity in thinking about normalized research, normalized paradigms, and normalized e-learning is noticeable in terms of the potential learning impacts on the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce (i.e. ‘the adult learners’) and the quality of their workplace education and training interventions. The social, cultural, and ideational, all are silenced by this pathological technological and economic sclerosis in normalized research. The centre of attention stays with the technological and economic information, to the virtually complete exclusion of workers and their diverse social and cultural learning needs.

Though studies increasingly point to normalized e-learning as increasingly ineffectual in providing workplace education and training interventions to a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce (Baggaley, 2008; Bell et al., 2008; Frankola, 2001; Honey, 2001; Newton et al., 2002; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2005;
Pantazis, 2002; Parrish, 2004; Remtulla, 2007; Schweizer, 2004), few alternatives are presented that indicate what research is missing, nor what are the ways out of this restrictive normalizing paradigm to the benefit of workers (Salas et al., 2002). As a result, adult education scholars and practitioners are left with limited options and often respond by conforming their workplace e-learning research, programs, and practices to support this same normalizing paradigm around this fixation on ‘economics’ and ‘technology’ (Gagnon & Doray, 2005).

Such a normalizing paradigm and the resultant normalized e-learning are laden with hegemonic, neo-liberal, Euro-centric, ontological assumptions, rationalizations, and justifications that may not be applicable to workers of diverse social groups and various cultural backgrounds. The effects of this type of thinking are becoming readily apparent. Frankola (2001) notes that corporate e-learners, in general, drop out for several reasons including: (a) disruptions at work when trying to complete courses at their desks; (b) lack of access to corporate intranets from home; (c) lack of technical support; (c) lack of motivation; (d) no student scaffolding or guidance to assist in learning; (e) differing learning preferences and styles; and, (f) poorly designed courses with ill-prepared instructors. Frankola (2001) concedes, “Too often companies dump courses on their employees and then wonder why they don’t finish them. Or, they expect an external vendor to run everything, but that doesn’t work because their employees don’t report to the e-learning provider” (p. 60). The reasons for high drop-out rates and incomplete learning are evidence of e-learning foci of work that places too much emphasis on the economics and technology, to the complete exclusion of any thinking about the workers and their socio-cultural learning needs (Baggaley, 2008; Honey, 2001; Parrish, 2004).
The implications of this circumstance are quite serious. Workers who do not fit within the assumptions of normalized e-learning, that links technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency, are deemed expendable and unworthy of employment. Similarly, workers who cannot persist in normalized e-learning for socio-culturally specialized needs are equally devalued, marginalized, and alienated (Frankola, 2001). Such workers are a hindrance to ‘better’ learning; less capable of ‘better’ work; and, therefore are not ‘better’ workers. SkillSoft’s (2006) findings also allude to this emerging sentiment that places normalized, technologically proficient, economically efficient workplace e-learning programs in judgement over a global and socio-culturally diverse adult learner cohort:

With the early adopters in particular, all the wrinkles in their e-learning programmes have been ironed out. This allows them to concentrate on optimising its impact and effectiveness and blending it with other learning methods to more closely match the needs of the learner.

In return for making such a wide range of training available and matching it to the needs of the learner, many of the employers expect to see a certain level of commitment from the employee. As self-directed learning grows, the responsibility for developing skills and knowledge will lie more with the employee than before. Consequently, lack of commitment the employee therefore is unlikely to be widely tolerated. (p. 17)

The number of workers and the dollars amounts currently being planned for investment into normalized e-learning, and the expected returns on these investments in monetary terms and improved organizational performance, may never fully materialize (Newton et al., 2002). When considering a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce, all
this puts at risk workers’ well-being in the workplace; undermines workers’ sense of self-efficacy; and, contributes to their employment becoming evermore contingent and precarious. The journal of *Industrial and Commercial Training* (Anonymous, 2001) makes this supporting observation:

> While the concept of e-learning is often confusing, the growing capability of technology has become too important an issue in developing the skills and abilities of individuals for employers to ignore. However, because it seems to have moved training from a people-oriented activity to a technical one, some managers may feel that it [e-learning] has become inaccessible or remote. (p. 278)

The workers and their social and cultural learning needs are completely quashed by this cycle of normalized research, normalizing paradigms, and normalized e-learning. For a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce, the prowess of the technological or the primacy of the economic may represent an ill-conceived substitute for the meaningfulness of the socio-cultural, democratic, humanistic, dialogic, and communal.

**Step 2**

From Step 1, a normalizing paradigm emerges from normalized research that socially and culturally constructs normalized e-learning as the (discursive) conflation of technological proficiency; economic efficiency; and, training consistency. Now that a normalizing paradigm is noticeable in Step 1, this chapter next turns to the issue of finding relevant critical perspectives. Critical perspectives may now be identified, that may assist in the praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research in response to normalized e-learning. This is the purpose behind Step 2. Step 2 comprises the remainder of Chapter 2 as well as Chapters 3, 4, and 5.
Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective of ‘social rationality’ is used by this thesis as both an interpretive and conceptual framework (Biklen & Casella, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005): (a) to interpret how principles of social rationality are inscribed into normalized e-learning; and, (b) to conceptually focus the critical analyses of the remaining chapters of Step 2 (that is, Chapters 3, 4, and 5). Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective also provides the necessary philosophical and ethical impetus to pursue and apply the necessary critical perspectives for socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Once necessary critical perspectives are identified, designing of taxonomies and frameworks may begin.

Recall that Step 1 undertakes socio-cultural inclusiveness research by using a socio-culturally oriented approach (Discourse Analysis). This is consistent with the overall message of this thesis towards considering normalized e-learning ideationally and not only as artefact. In Step 2, as in Step 1, not only does this thesis advocate for critical perspectives to contribute to the praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research, but this thesis also uses a critical perspective (Feenberg, 2008) as part of its own methodology. Thus both Step 1 and Step 2 are consistent with the overall message of this thesis for a shift towards socio-cultural inclusiveness when approaching normalized e-learning.

*Interpretive Framework*

What is the social and cultural relevance of a normalizing paradigm for society? This is a pertinent question when trying to identify the necessary critical perspectives for socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Whereas normalized research decontextualizes and normalizes e-learning around technological enhancements and economic gains, socio-cultural inclusiveness research recontextualizes e-learning and makes it an integral part of the broader social activities and cultural identities of workers as social beings in the world.
Feenberg’s (2008) critique of social rationality provides a means to answer the above question. Feenberg’s (2008) proposes that three principles combine to characterize rational, modern societies. Each principle is further realized through its own, specialized coordinating mechanism. These principles and their coordinating media include:

1. ‘Equal exchange’, as structured through markets.
2. ‘Classification and application of rules’, as administered through bureaucratic organizations.
3. ‘Optimal effort and calculation of outcomes’ as implemented through technology.

The simultaneous coming together of these principles and coordinating media socially and culturally construct modern societies as rationalized and justified, according to Feenberg (2008). Markets serve as structural mechanisms for rational, modern societies to facilitate the exchange of goods and services of equal value and, through this exchange, also determine this standardized value. Bureaucratic organizations, as part of the governmental landscape of rational, modern societies, require society to function and interact in consistent and predictable ways. Bureaucratic organizations administer rules and develop systems of ‘classification’ to categorize issues, people, places, and events, all so as to permit their control and governance. Technology and technological innovation, through formulae, methods, and systems of measurement and transfer, promote the maximization of outcomes through the infinite operationalization of efforts.

These coordinating media (that is, markets, bureaucratic organizations, and technology) are not supposed to be considered as mutually exclusive. In many ways, they are symbiotic in that they also rationalize and justify each other. Markets create value for technologies whilst technologies enable exchanges to take place. Bureaucratic organizations
rely on technologies to track and enforce classifications and rules. Bureaucratic organizations create governance to bring together markets and technologies in particular ways and to serve particular means and ends.

Is there any affinity between normalized e-learning and the principles of social rationality? Normalized e-learning is a socio-cultural consequence of a normalizing paradigm (that is, technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency). At the same time, a normalizing paradigm, that is ostensibly rationalized and justified, also emerges from the social conflation of equal exchange; classification and application of rules; and, the optimization of effort and measurement.

Table 3 reveals this convergence. The principles of social rationality and their respective coordinating media fit nicely with the normalizing paradigm from Step 1. In this way, social rationality is also embedded into normalized e-learning. Put another way, normalized e-learning signifies the social rationality that characterizes rational, modern societies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle of social rationality</th>
<th>Coordinating media</th>
<th>Normalizing paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal exchange</td>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Training consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification and application of rules</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal effort and calculation of outcomes</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bias in normalized e-learning.

The appeal of social rationality as a means to justify (the actions of) rational, modern societies is somewhat discrepant, according to Feenberg (2008). With an unfailing regularity and predictability, certain social arrangements within rational, modern societies continuously
favour particular social groups over others. Although reason, common sense, objectivity, and impartiality are all often cited as the anticipated attributes (and benefits) of rational, modern societies, these same rational, modern societies often exercise their propensity towards bias.

The persistent privileging of some groups over others points to ‘formal bias’, which Feenberg (2008) refers to as “prejudicial social arrangements….wherever the structure or context of rationalized systems or institutions favours a particular social group” (p. 10). Any and all of the three principles of social rationality (that is, equal exchange, classification and application of rules, and optimal effort and calculation of outcomes) may be embedded in formal bias that privileges certain groups over others in modern, socially rationalized societies. Such bias is structural, institutionalized, and systematic, consistently favouring one social group over others. This is the contradiction of rational, modern society that Feenberg (2008) seeks to expose through his critique of social rationality.

Accepting Feenberg’s (2008) critique on social rationality, brings into view the biases that are embedded by social rationality into normalized e-learning. The principle of ‘equal exchange’ becomes about standardization as a formal bias of normalized e-learning. The principle of ‘classification and application of rules’ becomes about categorization as a formal bias of normalized e-learning. The principle of ‘optimal effort and calculation of outcomes’ becomes about operationalization as a formal bias of normalized e-learning.

Table 4 captures this relationship between the principles of social rationality and the formal bias entrenched in normalized e-learning. The three basic assumptions that constitute the normalizing paradigm are also aligned here.
Table 4
*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normalising paradigm</th>
<th>Principle of social rationality</th>
<th>Formal bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training consistency</td>
<td>Equal exchange</td>
<td>Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
<td>Classification and application of rules</td>
<td>Categorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
<td>Optimal effort and calculation of outcomes</td>
<td>Operationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From bias to identity-centered alienation.*

Recall the socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary assumptions of the normalizing paradigm found in Step 1. These biases are also present in normalized e-learning (Feenberg, 2008). These biases are what enable social justification of the workforce from normalized e-learning. At the same time, these biases allow certain social groups within the workplace to be privileged over others as an outcome of this social justification from normalized e-learning.

Continuing with Feenberg (2008), applying social rationality to socially justify the workforce through normalized e-learning carries alienating implications. This alienation transpires from the formal biases inherent in normalized e-learning that privilege some social groups within the workplace over others. The resulting experience of ‘alienation’ from normalized e-learning directly affects the global socio-culturally diverse workforce in the workplace.

An almost exclusive spotlight on normalized e-learning as costs, profits, hardware and software, and using rationalized operations, categories, and standards, still does not address adult learners. Therefore, although normalized e-learning may be rationalized and justified, the basis for this social justification is somewhat incomplete and continues to draw its (biased) momentum from technological and economic arguments. A global and socio-
culturally diverse cohort of adult learners may still have their social and cultural learning needs go wanting. This overwhelming centre of attention on costs, profits, hardware and software places any review of normalized e-learning at somewhat of a disadvantage (Bell et al., 2008).

To better understand the socio-cultural consequences of bias, Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective on social rationality borrows somewhat from Marx’s (Giddens & Held, 1982; Meszaros, 1970; Ollman, 1976) thinking on alienation. In his own words, Marx (as cited in Giddens & Held, 1982) notes:

Since alienated labour: (1) alienates nature from man; and (2) alienates man from himself, from his own active function, his life activity; so it alienates him from the species.... For labour, life activity, productive life, now appear to man only as means for the satisfaction of a need, the need to maintain physical existence....In the type of life activity resides the whole character of a species, its species-character; and free, conscious activity is the species-character of human beings....Conscious life activity distinguishes man from the life activity of animals. (p. 16)

Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective includes some elements of Marx. However, Feenberg (2008) relates more to ICTs, culture, and identity against the backdrop of modern societies contending with globalization; migration; neo-liberal ideologies; governmentalism; and, technological innovation. For Feenberg (2008), the principles of social rationality inherent in rational, modern societies result in the alienation between: (a) how people recognize and identify themselves on a personal and cultural level; versus, (b) how they are recognized and identified as members of this rational, modern society, that is, their rationalized and socially justified identity. The cultural-historical identities that individuals
hold as their own now stand in opposition to the social-rational identities as members of rational, modern society:

Since economic and technical criteria determine more and more aspects of social life, capacities and needs that lack economic and technical significance are ignored….To the extent that the system fails to encompass all aspects of the lives it controls, the individuals become conscious of themselves as distinct from their social identity. The social and the individual stand opposed [italics added]… (Feenberg, 2008, p. 9)

Social rationality, through formal bias, socially constructs normalized e-learning that generates alienation within the workforce between the cultural-historical identities (that are personal) and their social-rational identities (from the workplace). In this way, normalized e-learning goes further and promotes social-rational identities over cultural-historical identities as favoured in the workplace. Identity-centered alienation manifests itself in any of three ways: (a) amongst workers and their peers and fellow workers; (b) between workers and their work; and, (c) as internal crises, amidst workers’ personal identities clashing with their workplace identities (Feenberg, 2008; Giddens & Held, 1982; Meszaros, 1970; Ollman, 1976). Normalized e-learning, as a result of formal bias, now becomes an instrument of identity-centered alienation.

Alienation through subjugation.

A somewhat convoluted argument now emerges: Since normalized e-learning ostensibly has the abilities to rationalize and justify a workforce in the workplace (that is, through standardization, categorization, and operationalization), this becomes a de facto rationalized justification for having normalized e-learning in a workplace. What this implies is something even more convoluted. The more normalized e-learning can do to rationalize
and justify the workforce, the more rationalized and justified becomes the need for having normalized e-learning at work.

Taken to a *rational and justifiable* conclusion, two effects are now likely:

1. An increasing proportion of the workforce will be subjected to or subject themselves to normalized e-learning; contribute to their own alienation and subjugation; and, still seek to become ‘normal’ by fulfilling the normalizing paradigm.

2. Only a decreasing proportion of the workforce will continue to garner a socially justified status in the workplace based on formal biases in normalized e-learning.

A closer scrutiny of some of the results reported by SkillSoft (2006) also alludes to these emerging trends. Recall that approximately 5,400 fulltime employees (from across the United Kingdom and in almost all industry sectors) participated in the SkillSoft (2006) benchmark study. Of these employees, 25% were management (approximately 1,350) and 69% were junior roles (approximately 3,730).

When asked whether they feel ‘actively involved’ in their training, an average of 40% of managers (approximately 540) and an average of 58% of junior employees (approximately 2,160) responded negatively. Comparing junior employees to managers, almost 3 times as many junior employees participate in workplace education and training interventions including e-learning programs, and yet, almost 4 times as many junior employees feel more disenfranchised. Similarly, all participants were asked about the advantages of taking more training: 41% (approximately 2,210) of respondents noted that they would be a seen as a bigger asset to the company; however, only 28% (approximately 1,510) thought they would have a better chance at promotion.
Feenberg (2008) supplies a useful interpretive framework for this thesis. Feenberg (2008) provides the opportunity for critical social analysis of rational, modern societies’ common predisposition towards justification through rationalization. Feenberg (2008) further provides ‘alienation’ as a (socio-cultural) consequence of social rationality. Since the dominant focus of normalized research rests on the technological and economic, taking Feenberg (2008) also allows for socio-cultural critique of the alienating implications of the normalizing paradigm when used as a means to socially justify the workforce through normalized e-learning.

Normalized e-learning, despite its lofty intentions, is equally susceptible to becoming an instrument to perpetuate ‘identity-centered’ alienation. Using Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as an interpretive framework, grants insights into the alienating implications of privileging some social groups in the workplace over others as a result of formal bias in normalized e-learning. The cultural hegemonies and corresponding social marginalization inculcated by a formal bias that privileges certain social groups over others, in the name of a ‘rationalized’ social justification, bears alienating implications when instrumentalized in the workplace through normalized e-learning.

*Conceptual Framework: Towards Critical Perspectives*

Next, using Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as conceptual framework, each of the remaining chapters in Step 2 (that is, Chapters 3, 4, and 5) takes their impetus from Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as conceptual framework to focus their arguments. Each chapter explores the alienating implications of one particular form of formal bias in normalized e-learning. Each chapter comprises a series of extensive literature reviews and survey’s of empirical studies and theoretical examinations of normalized e-learning
(primarily over the past two decades) that draws in on one aspect of formal bias and the socio-cultural consequences of alienation.

Using a critical pedagogy perspective, Chapter 3 draws in on the formal bias of ‘standardization’ and its alignment with ‘training consistency’ to discuss ‘worker-worker’ alienation from ‘pedagogical standardization’. Chapter 3 looks at three areas of pedagogical standardization in normalized research: (a) distance education from tertiary sector institutions; the turn to constructivism; and, the universalization trends of workplace education despite a diverse and global workforce.

Taking a critical culture perspective, Chapter 4 hones in on the formal bias of ‘categorization’ and its alignment with ‘economic efficiency’ to elaborate ‘worker-work’ alienation from ‘cultural categorization’. Chapter 4 explores three areas of ‘social categorization’ in normalized research: (a) workplace changes in terms of the diversity of the workforce, the knowledge-based economy, and work itself; (b) dominant discourses of e-learning as exclusionary cultural categories; and, (c) alienation of the workforce and adult education practitioners stemming from the marginalizing effects of digital divides and disintermediation.

With a critical history perspective, Chapter 5 focuses on the formal bias of ‘operationalization’ and its alignment with ‘technological proficiency’ to expand on ‘worker-identity’ alienation from ‘ahistorical operationalization’. Chapter 5 considers three areas of ‘ahistorical operationalization’ in normalized research: (a) infallible technological innovation and the fallible worker; (b) (re)shaping of normalized e-learning and worker identities over time; and, (c) the technological artefacts of normalized e-learning, including web-based
learning, learning objects, and learning management systems, as instruments of identity-centered alienation.

Table 5 presents a summative glimpse of the subsequent three chapters that comprise the remaining, critical analytical components of this thesis (that is, the remainder of Step 2). The critical analyses in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, all lay the groundwork for identifying critical perspectives and designing the taxonomies and frameworks for socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter and title</th>
<th>Formal bias as conceptual framework</th>
<th>Normalizing paradigm</th>
<th>Critical perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Universalized workplace education.</td>
<td>Standardization</td>
<td>Training consistency</td>
<td>Critical pedagogy: Worker-worker alienation from pedagogical standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The knowledge-based economy and e-learning: Critical considerations for workplace democracy.</td>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>Economic efficiency</td>
<td>Critical culture: Worker–work alienation from cultural categorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Infallibility of innovative artefacts.</td>
<td>Operationalization</td>
<td>Technological proficiency</td>
<td>Critical history: Worker-identity alienation from ahistorical operationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

This thesis advocates socio-cultural inclusiveness research in the face of normalized e-learning. This chapter presents Feenberg’s (2008) critique of social rationality as the critical perspective that is used for this thesis. Feenberg (2008) is applied in this chapter as both an interpretive and conceptual framework.
Feenberg (2008) puts forward social rationality as the critical link that connects the normalizing paradigm in normalized research with the socio-culturally alienated workforce undergoing normalized e-learning. The socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary assumptions inherent in normalized e-learning have alienating implications on the diverse workforce and their social and culturally varied learning needs. Formal bias inscribed into normalized e-learning privileges some social groups over others. Increasing numbers of the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce will likely continue to experience identity-centered alienation from normalized e-learning in the decades ahead.

This interpretive framework brings to light the socio-culturally alienating implications of the social justification of the workforce through biases that are inherent in normalized e-learning. Such circumstances inevitably result in alienation of a global and socio-culturally diverse adult learner cohort. Identity-centered alienation occurs between workers and their fellow workers; workers and work; and, as internal crises, involving workers cultural-historical (personal) identities versus their social-rational (workplace) identities.

This conceptual framework enables subsequent chapters in this thesis to identify and closely examine three biases of normalized e-learning. Present day practices of normalized research emphasize standardization, categorization, and operationalization, all tying back to technological proficiency, training consistency, and economic efficiency. If the dominant point of view for decision-making in the future remains an economic and technological one, then decision-makers may be satisfied as long as innovations in hardware and software perform well in terms of reductions of costs and increases in revenues. The socio-cultural criticisms of normalized e-learning may continue to go unnoticed for a while longer.
However, the growing and divergent learning needs of a global and socio-culturally diverse cohort of adult learners may present challenges that quickly move beyond the scope of any one technological innovation or economic target to cover up (Parrish, 2004).

Current, normalized research plays down the alienated plight of workers stemming from this rationalized, social justification of workers through normalized e-learning. Instead, normalized research foci emphasize attention towards costs, profits, hardware, and software. They speak to technologizing and economizing through normalized e-learning when it comes to learning, work, skills, and competencies. Alienation is overlooked in these cases, and, is inadvertently further entrenched in the workplace as a consequence.

The divergence of the economic/technological position versus the socio-cultural position on normalized e-learning, however, will factor ever more significantly in the future. Dollars of investment continue to mount in normalized e-learning. At the same time, workplaces continue to grapple with an increasingly global and socio-culturally diverse workforce that may not be meeting workplace priorities, accountabilities, performance, or productivity. With this reality, advocates of heavy investment in normalized e-learning may be well advised to start thinking socio-culturally.
References


A version of this chapter has been published as follows: Remtulla, K. (2010). *Socio-cultural impacts of workplace e-learning: Epistemology, ontology and pedagogy* (pp. 40-65). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
Relevance to Thesis

This chapter presents a critical pedagogy perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘equal exchange’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘standardization’ in normalized e-learning. This chapter looks at universalized workplace education and training interventions for workers (hereafter, ‘universalized workplace education’). Universalized workplace education for workers happens through hypermedia-centric, constructivist-based, normalized e-learning that configures technologies, constructivism, and instructors, all for a knowledge-based workplace. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (pedagogically) standardized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to training consistency. This results in some groups of learners being privileged over others as ‘better’ learners. This bears potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers and their peers and fellow workers (worker-worker alienation).

The universalizing outcomes of this hypermedia-centred, constructivist trend in normalized e-learning for workplace education and training interventions are concerning. Technique is increasingly used as the omnibus answer for all learners’ needs and goals. ‘Techno-logy’ increasingly replaces epistemology and ontology as the singular perspective for authentic learning. Some of the alienating, socio-cultural, exclusionary, conformist, and coercive effects of technology, constructivism, and instructors are all now problematized for a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce.

Please refer to the publication (as cited above) for the contents of Chapter 3.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY AND E-LEARNING:
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY


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This chapter presents a critical culture perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘classification and application of rules’ principles of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘categorization’ in normalized e-learning. The ideological shift by nation-states to 'a knowledge-based economy' (also referred to as 'knowledge-based society') is causing changes in the workplace. At the same time, normalized e-learning is heralded as the 'grand' solution for workplace education and training interventions for a global workforce within this knowledge-based economy. Purveyors and advocates of normalized e-learning boast of ushering in an era of renewed workplace participation and worker empowerment by allowing for any time education and anywhere access to knowledge as defining characteristics of workplace democracy in the knowledge-based economy. However, the demands of technological proficiency and economic gain result in a normalized e-learning that automatically privileges some types of work as more ‘knowledge-based’ and therefore more valued by the workplace than others. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (culturally) categorized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘economic efficiency’. This bears potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers and their work (worker-work alienation).

The critical considerations for normalized e-learning are found in the defining characteristic of the relationship between the transformation of work, normalized e-learning, and the digital divide. The very same social inequities, such as race, income, ability, and education, which contribute to the digital divide, also: (a) make normalized e-learning attractive to workplaces; and, (b) at the same time, are divisive of workforces. The current
perceived infallibility of normalized e-learning seems to ignore entirely the vulnerability and educational needs of the marginal, displaced, non-European, non-Western worker who will populate more and more of the global workforce in the 21st century; a supply of workers that is ever more socially and culturally varied.

Please refer to the publication (as cited above) for the contents of Chapter 4.
A version of this chapter has been published as follows: Remtulla, K. (2010). *Socio-cultural impacts of workplace e-learning: Epistemology, ontology and pedagogy* (pp. 86-106). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
Relevance to Thesis

This chapter presents a critical history perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘optimal effort and calculation of outcomes’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘operationalization’ in normalized e-learning. This chapter discusses the cultural paradigm of ‘innovative artefacts’ in the workplace. This paradigm culturally and discursively shapes e-leaning historicity for workplace education and training interventions, resulting in socio-cultural impacts on the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce. As technological proficiency and economic efficiency change over time, so do the attributes of what is a ‘good’ worker. Workers have no choice but to keep up. This privileges (knowledge) workers who are capable of adjusting to and abandoning past operational priorities and embrace current operations as these are the operations that are favoured, normalized, technologically superior, and economically beneficial. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (ahistorically) operationalized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘technological proficiency’. This bears potentially alienating implications for the workforce between workers’ personal, cultural-historical identities and their social-rational workplace identities (worker-identity alienation).

Driven by technological innovation, a renewed social-rational workplace identity periodically emerges to challenge the personal, cultural-historical identities of the workforce, placing a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce in a constant state of flux, doubt, and disequilibrium with respect to their own sense of voice, subjectivity, and self-efficacy. With technological innovation and the hardware-software foci, workplace education and training interventions will continue to be assessed by access through hardware and functionality of software. In turn, normalized e-learning will continue to alienate workers’ personal, cultural-
historical identities from their social-rational workplace identities. Learning materializes in the hardware and software. The dichotomous knowledge worker, under the yoke of a socially justified and rationalized training in the workplace, is charged with the responsibility to generate knowledge and then be perpetually separated from their knowledge in an infinite number of ways through socially rationalized standardization, categorization, and operationalization. The more ‘operationally’ separable a knowledge worker becomes from their knowledge, the more socially justified and ‘rationalized’ is their presence in the workplace.

Please refer to the publication (as cited above) for the contents of Chapter 5.
A version of this chapter has been published as follows: Remtulla, K. (2009). E-learning adaptability and social responsibility. In M. Khosrow-Pour (Ed.), Encyclopedia of information science and technology, second edition (pp. 1323-1328). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
Relevance to Thesis

This chapter presents a critical discourse perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of not accepting e-learning adaptability as a burgeoning social responsibility in the workplace, when thinking about normalized e-learning. E-learning adaptability is presented as one potential framework that may serve as scaffolding for critical perspectives to enable normalized research towards alternate, socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

This chapter brings together some of the elements discussed in previous chapters towards an understanding of how critical perspectives may begin to be applied towards normalized research. By including silenced and marginalized voices in normalized research, formal biases remain in check and normalized e-learning remains ambivalent, under-determined, and fertile with potential for greater inclusiveness.

The focus of attention must move beyond costs, savings, hardware, and software to include the global workforce and their social and cultural learning needs. More powerful software and hardware is not the whole answer. They do not necessarily translate into learning, or accomplishing social responsibility, whilst global workers’ needs go unresolved. E-learning adaptability is put forward as a means to attend to social responsibility towards the global and diverse workforce, when thinking about normalized e-learning.

Please refer to the publication (as cited above) for the contents of Chapter 6.
Background

Normalized workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalized e-learning’) are an instrument of social rationality in the modern, rational workplace. Normalized e-learning, based around a normalizing paradigm of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalizing paradigm’) of technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency, socially justifies a global and diverse workforce in the workplace. This social justification happens through formal biases such as pedagogical standardization, social categorization, and ahistorical operationalization that are inherent in normalized e-learning. At the same time, the social and cultural learning needs of a global and diverse workforce go unanswered by normalized research of workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘normalized research’) that focuses primarily on technological enhancements and economic gains. All this results in workforce alienation between: workers and other workers; workers and their work; and, identity-centered alienation, between workers’ cultural-historical versus their social-rational identities.

This thesis calls for a shifting of perspectives of normalized research. A new approach may be one means of engaging workers’ social and cultural learning needs from normalized e-learning. This thesis encourages change in the normalized research of normalized e-learning by asking:

What critical perspectives may be put forward to assist socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs?

This thesis addresses the dearth of socio-cultural inclusiveness research on workplace e-learning programs (hereafter, ‘socio-cultural inclusiveness research’). Recall from the
Introduction, that by ‘socio-cultural inclusiveness research’, this thesis means workplace e-learning research that takes into account the learning needs of the workforce with respect to their various social differences and culturally unique identities that affect, mediate, and interpret workers’ learning.

Socio-cultural inclusiveness research applies critical and emancipatory lenses as scaffolding to enable normalized research towards giving greater voice to silenced and marginalized learners undergoing normalized e-learning. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research attends to the social and cultural learning needs of a diverse workforce. Whereas normalized research decontextualizes and normalizes workplace e-learning programs around technological enhancements and economic gains, socio-cultural inclusiveness research recontextualizes workplace e-learning programs. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research reintroduces workplace e-learning programs as: (a) an integral part of the broader social activities and cultural identities of workers as social beings in the world; and, (b) an experience that bears social and cultural consequences for workers’ learning that stretch beyond the technology and economics; and, also reach outside of the workplace.

Fournier et al. (2006) confirm this need:

in the context of this debate around the e-learning hype cycle, e-learning will not regain its strong ‘market presence’ again until an effective consumer and small enterprise model is developed; a model that should do well if it were to place adult learners at the heart of the solution. (p. 17)

In response to the normalization, rationality, and alienation inherent in normalized e-learning, this thesis puts forward critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks that promote praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. This thesis puts forward four critical
perspectives that enhance socio-cultural inclusiveness research: (a) critical pedagogy (Chapter 3); (b) critical culture (Chapter 4); (c) critical history (Chapter 5); and, (d) critical discourse (Chapter 6). Later in this chapter, these critical perspectives are integrated into taxonomies and frameworks. Together, these critical perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks signify an alternate approach to the dominance of normalized research of normalized e-learning. These perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks are all intended to scaffold current, normalized research towards increased socio-cultural inclusiveness research of workplace e-learning programs. All this is done for the social and cultural learning needs of a growing, global, diverse cohort of adult learners who may be increasingly experiencing (socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary) normalized e-learning for workplace education and training interventions.

Alienating Implications of Normalized E-learning

Worker-worker Alienation

The rational, social justification of the workforce that happens through pedagogical standardization, results in a universalized workplace education and training intervention from normalized e-learning. This results in alienation between workers and their peers and fellow workers (worker-worker alienation).

Faith in the infallibility of innovative artefacts of normalized e-learning, leads to the following premise that results in worker-worker alienation: greater variety of forms in technology, regarding distribution and access of information, equates with better workplace e-learning programs for all workers. Decisions about normalized e-learning become about development and/or investment in efficient systems and platforms and not about the learning
needs of a socially and demographically diverse, multicultural, and multifaceted workforce (Remtulla, 2007b).

Hewlett-Packard understands that employee preferences for workplace e-learning programs differ around the world. According to DeRouin et al. (2005), Hewlett-Packard discovered their mistakes with normalized e-learning and took action. Hewlett-Packard found that their employees in Asia and Europe preferred instructor-facilitated training whereas in the United States, a self-paced format is favoured. Hewlett-Packard’s training motto for their global workforce is “one size does not fit all” substantiating that, “These variations in e-learning preferences by region suggest that a single type of e-learning program may not meet the needs and expectations of all employees” (p. 926).

Worker-work Alienation

The rational, social justification of workers through cultural categorization of normalized e-learning, and organizational bureaucracies, results in a reductively categorized and bureaucratized workplace education and training intervention. These further result in alienation between workers and their work (worker-work alienation).

The learning environment that emerges from the blend of categorization and bureaucracy in normalized e-learning may be dissimilar to the actual experiential-based work undertaken by workers on a daily basis. Trust in the categories and classifications of normalized e-learning leads to the following premise that results in worker-work alienation: The greater the variety in the functionality of software and applications, the better the workplace e-learning programs. Discussions address the effectiveness of categories in filling the bureaucratic gap between intentions and outcomes of applications and not the social and cultural learning needs of a multicultural and multifaceted workforce. The debate turns to the
suitability or appropriateness of the software category as opposed to the learning needs of varying jobs or the support and the empowerment of a global and diverse workforce (Remtulla, 2007b).

The mining industry in Queensland, Australia, realized that ‘organizational culture’ played a major role when it came to workplace e-learning implementation and the conflicting needs (and cultures) of differing user communities (Newton, Hase, & Ellis, 2002). Management felt that categorization was beneficial to meet industry-wide competency compliance legislation and as an effective means to transfer corporate values to new employees. Industry workers instead indicated that they did not appreciate the bureaucratized feel of corporate policy information on screen, but preferred direct access to only the information that was most relevant to them. In addition, “Viewing training as a legislative requirement in the mining industry was seen to conflict with other values in terms of providing ‘good’ training in terms of learners’ needs of ‘lifelong learning’ goals” (p. 160).

Worker-identity Alienation

The rational, social justification of workers by ahistorical operationalization from normalized e-learning, and their technological artefacts, also leads to alienation. In this case, workers experience alienated sense of identity (worker-identity alienation).

For example, recall from Chapter 5 the discussion on Learning Management Systems (hereafter, ‘LMS’). LMS operate as instruments of identification and control over workers. LMS provide workplaces with power over workers’ workplace education and training interventions. Workers’ ability to access normalized e-learning is limited by what is acceptable to and sanctioned by their workplace. Access to normalized e-learning is limited to those workers who are socially justified in ways that are acceptable to the workplace. They
are identified as ‘better workers’ based on ahistorical and operational criteria. Workers whose cultural-historical identities do not measure-up to these social-rational criteria are denied access and suffer social marginalization and cultural exclusion.

Ahistorical operationalization from LMSs also influences workplace conceptions of competences of workers. Viewing competences as an asset implies characteristics of completeness; tangibility; capitalization; investment; obsolescence and depreciation; and, separability. Competence in this case can be quantified, counted, and compared. This seems to be the dominant point of view, especially were LMSs are concerned (Håland & Tjora, 2006). Competencies in the workforce may be present that remain outside of current operations. Workplaces may even be benefiting from these ‘unseen’ competencies, yet such ‘uncounted’ workers suffer social marginalization and cultural exclusion nevertheless.

Table 1 summarizes the analyses in each of the previous chapters that comprise this thesis (except Chapter 6 which is integrated into the taxonomies and frameworks later in this chapter). Recall that each analytical chapter (that is, Chapters 3, 4, and 5) takes its impetus from Feenberg’s (2008) critical perspective as conceptual framework of this thesis as it is applied to normalized e-learning. Each chapter also focuses on a particular type of formal bias and highlights aspects of alienation that occur as a result.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter and critical perspective</th>
<th>Principle of social rationality and normalizing paradigm</th>
<th>Alienating implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 – Pedagogical</td>
<td>Training consistency from equal exchange</td>
<td>Worker-worker alienation from pedagogical standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 – Cultural</td>
<td>Economic efficiency from classification and application of rules</td>
<td>Worker-work alienation from cultural categorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 – Historical</td>
<td>Technological proficiency from optimal effort and calculation of outcomes</td>
<td>Worker-identity alienation from ahistorical operationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perspectives, Taxonomies, and Frameworks

This section constructs the taxonomies and frameworks put forth by this thesis for socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Together with the critical perspectives discussed in earlier chapters, these taxonomies and frameworks: (a) integrate the thinking and analysis from all previous chapters; (b) signify a research outline for socio-cultural inclusiveness research of normalized e-learning; (b) redress social rationality, formal biases, and workforce alienation; and, (d) respond to the socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary challenges of normalized research, normalizing paradigms, that all currently confront workers as they encounter normalized e-learning.

Taxonomies and Frameworks

Table 2 summarizes the analyses in each of the previous four chapters of this thesis and links them with perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks to follow.
Table 2

**Critical Perspectives: Towards Taxonomies and Frameworks for Socio-cultural Inclusiveness Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter and title</th>
<th>Alienating implications</th>
<th>Critical perspective</th>
<th>Taxonomy / Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3-Universalized workplace education.</td>
<td>Pedagogical standardization from equal exchange</td>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
<td>Taxonomy 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4-The knowledge-based economy and e-learning: Critical considerations for workplace democracy.</td>
<td>Cultural categorization from classification and application of rules</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Taxonomy 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5-Infallibility of innovative artefacts.</td>
<td>Ahistorical operationalization from optimal effort and calculation of outcomes</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Taxonomy 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6-E-learning adaptability and social responsibility.</td>
<td>Social responsibility from hardware, software, and instructional design.</td>
<td>Discursive</td>
<td>Taxonomy 4 and Frameworks 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Taxonomy 1: Worker-worker alienation from pedagogical standardization.**

This taxonomy presents a critical pedagogy perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘equal exchange’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘standardization’ in normalized e-learning. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (pedagogically) standardized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to training consistency. This results in some groups of learners being privileged over others as ‘better’ learners. This bears potentially alienating implications on the workforce between workers and their peers and fellow workers (worker-worker alienation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a), (b), or (c)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Standardization</th>
<th>Alienating Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce being subjected to worker-worker alienation through pedagogical standardization in the name of training consistency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taxonomy 2: Worker-work alienation from cultural categorization.

This taxonomy presents a critical culture perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘classification and application of rules’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘categorization’ in normalized e-learning. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (culturally) categorized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘economic efficiency’. This bears potentially alienating implications on the workforce between workers and their work (worker-work alienation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact</th>
<th>Digital divide</th>
<th>Disintermediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Categorization</td>
<td>Alienating Implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How is the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce being subjected to worker-work alienation through cultural categorization in the name of economic efficiency?
Taxonomy 3: Worker-identity alienation from ahistorical operationalization.

This taxonomy presents a critical history perspective on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of the ‘optimal effort and calculation of outcomes’ principle of social rationality, which leads to a formal bias of ‘operationalization’ in normalized e-learning. The focus here is on the socio-cultural inclusiveness of (ahistorically) operationalized, normalized e-learning stemming from the basic assumption that: Normalized e-learning leads to ‘technological proficiency’. This bears potentially alienating implications on the workforce between workers’ personal, cultural-historical identities and their social-rational workplace identities (worker-identity alienation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a), (b), or (c)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahistorical Operationalization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How is the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce being subjected to worker-identity alienation through ahistorical operationalization in the name of technological proficiency?
Taxonomy 4: Social responsibility and workplace e-learning adaptability.

This taxonomy presents a critical discourse perspective on the alienating implications of not accepting e-learning adaptability as a burgeoning social responsibility in the workplace, when thinking about normalized e-learning. E-learning adaptability is presented as one potential framework that may serve as scaffolding for critical perspectives to enable e-learning adaptability towards alternate, socio-cultural inclusiveness research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Normalized E-learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxonomy 4: Social Responsibility and Workplace E-learning Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Artefacts: (a) Internet/Web-based Learning (b) Learning Objects (c) Learning Management Systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact (a), (b), or (c)</th>
<th>Workplace E-learning Adaptability</th>
<th>Alienating Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>Instructional Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Responsibility

How is the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce being denied social responsibility through a lack of e-learning adaptability in the name of normalized e-learning?
Frameworks 1, 2, 3, and 4: Socio-cultural inclusiveness and workplace e-learning adaptability.

Frameworks 1, 2, 3, and 4, all deepen the focus of the critical perspectives of workplace e-learning programs set by Taxonomy 4. Each framework brings together constructivism and adult learning with workplace e-learning adaptability; each of the technological artefacts of workplace e-learning; and, critically considers the implications on socio-cultural inclusiveness at this intersection. Specific research questions are now put forward for further study through socio-cultural inclusiveness research.
### Framework 1: Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability

**Technological Artefacts:** (a) Internet/Web-based Learning  
(b) Learning Objects  
(c) Learning Management Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact (a), (b) or (c)</th>
<th>Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Learning Action</td>
<td>Learning Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>Is self-reflection the only way a learner can gain true meaning from learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equilibration</td>
<td>How does the learner decide what experiences are worthy of self-reflection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assimilation</td>
<td>Can the learner self-reflect on experience without being influenced by non-rational effects like emotions, values, the subconscious mind, or, from social, cultural, or historical contexts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accommodation</td>
<td>Is the ‘individualized’ outlook for self-reflection in the workplace more representative of a specific segment of the workforce, namely those who are white, of European or Western descent, employed, better educated, and in leadership positions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adaptation</td>
<td>Is the ‘individualized’ outlook for self-reflection in the workplace marginalizing groups who may not be exposed to self-reflection in the workplace such as adults with disabilities, developmentally challenged adults, and adults with special needs; women, people of colour, working class adults, and immigrant learners?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discovery Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-directed Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is self-reflection always perfect and precise in every experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does everyone in the workplace ‘self-reflect’ in the same way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is experience something concrete, tangible, and definable that can be appropriated, controlled, dissected, and analyzed for learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Framework 2: Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability

### Technological Artefacts: (a) Internet/Web-based Learning (b) Learning Objects (c) Learning Management Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact</th>
<th>Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a), (b) or (c)</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Learning Action</td>
<td>Is problem solving the only way to look at the workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the learner completely free, detached, and independent from other workplace constraints, impediments, or communities to solve problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What motivates the learner to say something is a problem and something else is not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the characteristics of a ‘good’ problem solver and who gets to decide who is going to participate in solving the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who decides what problem is worthy of resolution, versus what is normal, and, how do they reach this decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the ‘individualized’ outlook for problem solving in the workplace more representative of a specific segment of the population, namely those who are white, of European or Western descent, employed, better educated, and in leadership positions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the ‘individualized’ outlook for problem solving in the workplace marginalizing groups who may have the privilege to ‘problem solve’ in the workplace such as adults with disabilities, developmentally challenged adults, and adults with special needs; women, people of colour, working class adults, and immigrant learners?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is everything that is ‘different’ and unique in the workplace necessarily a problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is every problem knowable and resolvable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Normalized E-learning

Framework 3: Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability

Technological Artefacts: (a) Internet/Web-based Learning (b) Learning Objects (c) Learning Management Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact (a), (b) or (c)</th>
<th>Constructivist Learning Action</th>
<th>Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Genre Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Zone of proximal development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Media Contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small Group Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperative Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is collaboration the only way to look</td>
<td>Is the group as concerned</td>
<td>Is a group something fixed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at group and teamwork in the workplace?</td>
<td>about the task as it is about</td>
<td>concrete, tangible, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the learner decide what</td>
<td>the members?</td>
<td>definable that may be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences are worthy of</td>
<td></td>
<td>appropriated, controlled,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaboration?</td>
<td></td>
<td>dissected, and analyzed for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the learner collaborate without</td>
<td>Is group membership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being influenced by non-rational</td>
<td>indicative of certain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effects like emotions, values, the</td>
<td>behaviours expected from its</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subconscious mind, or, from social,</td>
<td>members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural, or historical contexts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who decides who gets to be a member</td>
<td>What are the characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the group?</td>
<td>of a ‘good’ group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What motivates the learner to join a</td>
<td>Does hierarchies and margins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group?</td>
<td>form in a group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the group speak for all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>members with one voice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Framework 4: Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability

Technological Artefacts: (a) Internet/Web-based Learning (b) Learning Objects (c) Learning Management Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Artefact</th>
<th>Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a), (b) or (c)</td>
<td>Learning Management Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Learning Action</td>
<td>Learning Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Is participation so dependent on community and context that whatever is learned is impossible to transfer to other communities and contexts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is participation so concerned with context that it ignores the kind of knowledge being acquired and the ways the material needs to be is engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the learner’s identity solely defined by the community; what about multiple identities; what if learners belong to more than one community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the ‘universal’ outlook that every community has a center representative of a specific segment of the population, namely those who are white, of European or Western descent, employed, better educated, and in leadership positions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who decides which learners get to participate in the community and what is knowledge in the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the ‘universal’ outlook of communities with centers create marginalized groups which includes adults with disabilities, developmentally challenged adults, and adults with special needs; women, people of colour, working class adults, and immigrant learners are ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the ‘universal’ outlook of participating in a community good for everyone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the ‘universal’ outlook of communities with centers ignore the existence of resistance in communities that may be unjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the characteristics of a ‘good’ community?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Envisioning Possible Futures

The Dominant Discourse: Normalized Alienation

At present, normalized research and normalized e-learning stand in contrast to the social and cultural learning needs of the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce. The reality for a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce is that they will likely experience all three types of alienation to some degree as they more frequently encounter socially marginalizing and culturally exclusionary, normalized e-learning in their workplaces in the years to come.

Identity-centered alienation and ‘prototypical knowledge workers’.

Normalized research, normalizing paradigms, and normalized e-learning, all currently lead to alienation in the workforce through pedagogical standardization, social categorization, and ahistorical operationalization. What does this say about the worker who is presumed to exist at the center of all this activity? Who is this worker that is so willing to be subjected to, or subject themselves to, normalized e-learning and alienation?

At the center of this standardization, categorization, and operationalization is the ‘prototypical knowledge worker’ (Brint, 2001; Darr & Warhurst, 2008; Håland & Tjora, 2006; Rooney, 2005). Gee (2005) explains the notion of ‘prototypical’ for this thesis:

Because we do share ways of looking at things with other members of various social and cultural groups, we all have the capacity to form prototypical simulations…Prototypical simulations are the sorts of simulations you will run in your head like weddings…when you take the situation to be ‘typical’. Of course, what is taken as ‘typical’ differs across different social and cultural groups and people. (p. 75)
As is notable in identity-centered alienation from normalized e-learning, certain assumptions remain part of the definitions and conceptions of the prototypical knowledge worker. Such assumptions include what kind of knowledge worker is anticipated to participate in normalized e-learning; what parts of the world will this knowledge worker come from; what values, behaviours, and motivations will these knowledge workers possess; and, finally, what ‘knowledge’ is included as worthy and necessary for this knowledge worker to thrive and succeed. If knowledge is perceived as an asset, as capital, then what does this mean for the knowledge worker? How does this dichotomy of knowledge from worker play itself out in the workplace? Brint (2001) wonders, “should professionals be treated as bringing a central resource to economic production or should they be considered a privileged stratum of workers whose labour is ultimately subordinate to those who own and control workplaces… the question is whether knowledge should be considered analogous to capital or labour” (p. 115).

The answers, according to Darr and Warhurst (2008), revolve around a prototypical knowledge worker who is presumed to be a westernized subject of middle class upbringing and European descent. This prototypical knowledge worker is presumed to be highly educated with the necessary qualifications and credentials, is information savvy and technologically elite, and trained with the ability to do predominantly mental work and extract meaning from the manipulation of symbols and tables. Such a prototypical knowledge worker is also naturally attuned to continuous cycles of pedagogical standardization, cultural categorization, and ahistorical operationalization.

There are notable social and cultural assumptions (Darr & Warhurst, 2008). The prototypical knowledge worker, regardless of ability, race, gender, or nationality, personifies
knowledge selectively identified by organizational lexicon as culturally valuable to their workplace. This is the prototypical knowledge worker who is also willing to be rewritten in the image of whatever is deemed as culturally valuable knowledge, even if corporate lexicon changes over time. This prototypical knowledge worker is a worker whose cultural-historical identity has been over-written by a social-rational identity that meets the normalized expectations as dictated by pedagogical standardization, cultural categorization, and ahistorical operationalization. The unquestioned infallibility of normalized e-learning is overwhelmingly designed in favour of this equally accepted and infallible prototypical knowledge worker. This prototypical knowledge worker is uniquely capable of conforming to ever changing, rationalized standards, operations, and categories.

A concerning scenario emerges for the future of workplace education and training interventions that center on normalized e-learning. If current trends remain unchanged with respect to normalized e-learning, the global and diverse workforces of the future face key social and cultural learning challenges:

1. An increasing proportion of the workforce will: be subjected to or subject themselves to normalized e-learning; contribute to their own identity-centered alienation and subjugation; and, persist in the quest for prototypical knowledge worker ‘status’.

2. A decreasing proportion of the workforce will continue to garner a rationalized, justified prototypical knowledge worker status in the workplace due to pedagogical standardization, social categorization, and ahistorical operationalization.
3. Increasingly, workers who resist a normalizing paradigm that links technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency, will be deemed expendable and unworthy of employment. Similarly, workers who cannot persist in normalized e-learning for socio-culturally specialized learning needs will be equally devalued, marginalized, and alienated.

4. All the above puts at risk workers’ well-being in the workplace; undermines their sense of self-efficacy; and, contributes to their employment becoming evermore contingent and precarious.

Knowledge, through technology, is managed away from workers (Darr & Warhurst, 2008; Drucker, 1959, 1993; Wild et al., 2002). In this regard, the dichotomous identities that transpire for workers in the workplace occur along several fronts. The dichotomies that now materialize for workers and the knowledges attributed to them occur through the application of regimes of formal bias that concurrently exacerbate and reinforce this separation. The reification of the prototypical knowledge worker as separate and distinct identity from the ‘ordinary worker’ is now socially justified through pedagogical standardization, cultural categorization, and ahistorical operationalization from normalized e-learning in the workplace.

This drives a proverbial wedge between the ontology of a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce and the prototypical, hegemonic knowledge worker as ideal and socially desirable. All three forms of workforce alienation stem from the catharsis (Zuboff, 1988) of the prototypical knowledge worker expectations imposed on a global, socio-culturally diverse workforce. Through the instrument of normalized e-learning, identity-centered
alienation is the outcome of cultural control that is perpetrated on the workforce through the prototypical image of the knowledge worker (Sewell, 2005).

Rooney’s (2005) study of “a 1.3 million word corpus of knowledge-related policy documents compiled from local, state, national, and supranational institutions throughout the industrialised and industrialising world” (p. 409) points clearly and unequivocally to the utter lack of concern where workers and the socio-cultural are concerned. Policymakers trend towards other key points when it comes to the knowledge-based economy and (prototypical) knowledge workers:

*The corpus is also interesting for its lack of accommodation of social and cultural aspects of knowledge* [italics added]. Even if one justifiably seeks economic benefits from knowledge, because knowledge is profoundly based in social and cultural processes the economic benefits will be dependant on those social and cultural foundations. In this situation even the economic planner who recognises the economic importance of knowledge must consider and discuss the social and cultural fundamentals. (p. 420)

If normalization (May & Finch, 2009) in normalized e-learning continues, fewer and fewer workers will actually meet the description of knowledge workers. And if normalized e-learning is fashioned for the prototypical knowledge worker, such normalized e-learning will speak to fewer workers. Darr and Warhurst (2008) add that “these debates move quickly from description of occupational changes to predictions of social transformation or prescriptions for management, without ever pausing to consider the work practice evidence-base upon which these predictions and prescriptions might be grounded” (p. 39).
Socio-cultural Inclusiveness and Workplace E-learning
Karim Amirali Remtulla

The realities of underemployment, disempowerment, marginalization, and exclusion, will continue to persist, even in knowledge-based workplaces (Darr & Warhurst, 2008; Livingstone, 2001). Not all workers will reach this prototypical image of the ‘perfected’ knowledge worker, nor will be willing to do so, and as such the prototypical knowledge worker is limited to an increasingly privileged and elite proportion of the increasingly global and diverse workforce.

Democratized Discourses: Socio-cultural Inclusiveness

What is meant by socio-cultural inclusiveness as ‘democratized discourses’?
According to Alfred (2002b), the primary issue is, “To what extent can the adult education classroom be democratic in its structure and orientation if it is to hear the multiple voices [italics added] of community members” (p. 11). Placing normalized e-learning alongside the varied learning and work experiences of a global and socio-culturally diverse workforce, however, reveals good reason for concern with respect to socio-cultural inclusiveness and the democratic implications on the workforce.

Despite the transformations and changes occurring in the workplace and workforce, the instrument of normalized e-learning as it is currently deployed is heavily biased towards masculine, technological, commodified, objectified, and westernized standpoints. Increasingly in the future, these formal biases will exported around the world as hegemonic ‘best practices’ for workplace e-learning programs (Bousquet & Wills, 2003; King, 2003; Lim, Ripley, & O'Steen, 2009; Mojab, 2000; Steven, 2004). Therefore, although normalized e-learning may be expanding globally, the basis for this explosive growth is marginalizing, exclusionary, and undemocratic.
This normalized model of workplace e-learning programs is already proving to be unsustainable. The productivity gains so hoped for from the workforce are simply not being realized as quickly, nor as completely (Baggaley, 2008; Frankola, 2001; Honey, 2001; Parrish, 2004; Remtulla, 2007a). Even the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005) admits, “Failures of e-learning operations have, at least temporarily, overshadowed the prospects of widened and flexible access to tertiary education, pedagogic innovation and decreased cost, that e-learning once embodied” (Introduction section, para. 3).

Workers are now more often multicultural, multitalented, and multilingual, and bring with them views on organizational priorities, accountabilities, performance, and productivity, that may all be socially and culturally very different from one another. As Alfred (2002a) suggests:

Viewing the scholarship and practice of adult education through a socio-cultural [sic] lens allows us to recognize, name, and challenge hegemonic practices and ideologies, thus paving the way for a more critical democratic adult education. The process of critical awareness through reflection, enhancing understanding through knowledge, and engaging in critical action does not proceed in stages; instead, it is an interactive process of continuous transformation of the personal and the social. (p. 94)

The overwhelming focus on technology and economics in normalized research and normalized e-learning places a global and socio-culturally diverse cohort of adult learners at a democratic disadvantage with respect to addressing their social and cultural learning needs, now or in the future. Future global and diverse workforces will be faced with two unenviable and undemocratic choices: (a) resist normalization in the pursuit of their social and cultural
learning needs, and face marginalization and exclusion; or, (b) accept normalization, sacrifice their cultural-historical identity, and chase an ever-elusive, social-rational identity of prototypical knowledge worker.

Rather than being an intersection of democratized discourses, current, normalized research revolves around a dominant discourse of normalized research. Pedagogical standardization, cultural categorization, and ahistorical operationalization from normalized e-learning are all combining to socially justify the social-rational identity of workers over their cultural-historical identities resulting in alienation that transcends workers, work, and their identities. A normalizing paradigm of technological proficiency, economic efficiency, and training consistency, thrusts the hegemonic image of the prototypical knowledge worker as idealized and valourized against workers cultural-historical identities. Workers deserve a say in their own identities, but are hard-pressed to find such spaces in normalized e-learning.

Alfred (2002b) again observes:

the challenging question that today's adult educators are faced with is the extent to which these diverse contexts influence learning, and how to create a responsible learning environment where students can participate in the discourse of learning without sacrificing their personal and cultural identity. (p. 3)

Workforce alienation, marginalization, and exclusion promoted by a lack of socio-cultural inclusiveness in normalized e-learning presents an undemocratic future characterized by a gradual shutting out of those workers who do not (or cannot) meet standards, categories, and measures that they face. This shutting out happens in two ways: (a) on the job; and, (b) access to jobs in the first place (Brint, 2001; SkillSoft, 2006). In short, as noted by Guy, “A democratic adult education environment, therefore, is one in which a multiplicity of cultures
and worldviews coexists and indeed thrives” (as cited in Alfred, 2002a, p. 90). Socio-cultural inclusiveness research in this way enables democratized discourses in the research and implementations of workplace e-learning programs for future generations of adult learners.

Closing Remarks

As this thesis explains, it is not sufficient to proclaim that normalized e-learning is a panacea for most, if not all, workplace education and training interventions. Greater functionality and scalability, or the introduction of reusable code or modularity, do not necessarily equate to better learning if the socio-cultural goes unrecognized. When it comes to the juxtaposition(s) of people, technology, and culture, betterment of workplace educational quality may actually be more influenced by what and how people think, feel, conceive, and perceive about themselves, and each other, than how often they sit in front of an online course (Bell et al., 2008; Feenberg, 1991; Ismail, 2002; Parrish, 2004; Remtulla, 2007a).

Despite a growing, global cohort of learners that is socially and culturally heterogeneous, there is a conspicuous paucity of adult education research when it comes to investigations based on socio-cultural inclusiveness in normalized e-learning. Socio-cultural critiques of normalized e-learning based on the social and cultural learning needs of the global and socio-culturally diverse workforce remain imperative. This insight is crucial for management and decision-making prior to significant investment in normalized e-learning. Adult education researchers and practitioners may find this significant also to envision the futures of normalized e-learning and the global workforce.
For normalized e-learning to provide socially and culturally meaningful learning to a global workforce that is socially and culturally diverse, socio-cultural inclusiveness research is paramount to answer to pedagogical standardization, social categorization, and ahistorical operationalization. Socio-cultural inclusiveness research can influence this outcome by acknowledging and identifying and applying perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks that evolve and authentically speak to a dynamic cohort of employees with a progressively elaborate profile of learning needs.

This thesis advocates critical perspectives for the purposes of more socio-cultural inclusiveness research. To accomplish this task, this thesis puts forward taxonomies and frameworks support praxis of socio-cultural inclusiveness research. These taxonomies and corresponding frameworks strive for the transforming of normalized research and normalized e-learning for the benefit of a global and socio-culturally diverse cohort of adult learners that will increasingly come to comprise the workforces of the future.

The perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks put forth in this thesis, lay out a promising research outline for socio-cultural inclusiveness research (Remtulla, 2007a, 2009, 2010). These perspectives, taxonomies, and frameworks for doing research, think about normalized e-learning using a critical and emancipatory lens; give voice to learners; acknowledge the socio-cultural complexities of epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy in adult learning; see e-learning programs in the workplace as democratic spaces and more than just hardware and software; and finally, may lead to the development of alternate approaches and methodologies for doing critical, emancipatory, socio-cultural inclusiveness research. Workplace e-learning will increasingly factor into adult education researchers’ conversations
and their explorations with the anxious *voices* of the global workforce in the decades yet to come.
References

Alfred, M. V. (2002a). Linking the personal and the social for a more critical democratic adult education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 96*, 89-95.


