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02. Building A Culture of Inquiry: 21st Century Learning Ecosystem Opportunities Project

21CLEO Research Team

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Building A Culture of Inquiry: 21st Century Learning Ecosystem Opportunities Project

January 29, 2019 21 CLEO

By 21CLEO Research Team

It is with great enthusiasm that we kick off this new interactive blog with an initial post about the **21st Century Learning Ecosystem Opportunities Project**. This collective research effort seeks to identify the constellation of factors that motivate and encourage frontline service workers to engage in workplace sponsored learning. We see this work as important because workplace learning opportunities have the potential to open opportunities for skills and knowledge development that not only supports success on the job but also reaches into daily life, particularly if it is learning that leads to strengthened capacity to engage with digital technologies.

In this first blog post we include

- brief introductions of the team members
- some background and motivation behind this work
- description of future posts that describe the research planned across the phases of this effort including research questions and opportunities to participate in the recruitment of research participants and sites
- an invitation to get involved in this important work

Introducing Our Team

Kathy is an applied linguist, adult ESL learning specialist, and adult educator. Kathy researches digital learning innovations and directs the Learner Web initiative, an online portal for collaboration and learning materials shared among many adult education providers. **Jen** is a teacher educator, instructional designer, and researcher who helped developed the NorthStar Digital Literacy assessment that has been used widely by adult educators and employers to help pinpoint and document the digital skills an individual has and opportunities to acquire additional skills. **Jill** is an adult educator who collaborates with librarians, community college educators, and researchers to examine digital literacies acquisition and digital problem solving. **Gloria** is an educational researcher who explores digital literacies, digital problem solving, and learning across the lifespan from adolescent to adults within informal and formal settings.

This research effort unites our complementary perspectives across multiple aspects of adult learning, workforce development, and educational equity. It provides a vehicle for each of us to bring our unique perspective and experience to bear as we collect and examine the voices of worker-learners and their motivations for learning in the full range of learning opportunities available to them.

Over the course of several years we have been discussing adult learning and the changing dimensions of the 21st century learning opportunities with our adult education and workforce colleagues. When we first gathered to discuss this project, we recognized the need to establish a culture of inquiry across a range of stakeholder groups (learners, practitioners, employers, funders, policymakers, and others) in order to design, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve educational innovations for positive impact. A culture of inquiry is an examination of the multiple factors, multiple stakeholder groups, and multiple viewpoints and voices that must work together to understand and examine relationships between instruction and impact for adult learners in the workforce and beyond. We felt that the collective efforts of many individuals and organizations working together toward common goals and through shared dialogue could lead to powerful insights and have a lasting impact on adult learning and workforce development efforts.

Join Us

This blog invites you to help us to make good on our original goal to create a shared culture of inquiry where worker-learners, employers, learning facilitators, and researchers come together as co-collaborators. Our early efforts have revealed several important ideas and activities, which include:

- read this blog and discuss it
- get engaged in dialogue around shared priorities
- encourage an expanded view of what research is and can be by embracing research that equally value empirical research and **participatory action**
- engage in the research endeavor as an inclusive process
- **democratize** the voices of all stakeholders, empowering all voices/perspectives (working learners, employers, practitioners, policy makers, and beyond)
- promote **equitable discourse** around opportunities for all working learners
- create virtual, cross-sector networks and spaces to work together and listen to each other, with an emphasis on doing, creating, addressing real problems through **collective action**.

To create collective action, we are launching a multi-phase research effort and a companion dissemination portal (this blog) to provide a vehicle for sharing our processes, developing insights, and initial findings with a wide readership. We hope to encourage dialogue and conversation with each of you and your networks where new and different ideas about adult education can be introduced, thought through, discussed, debated, and eventually translated into action. This blog is a place for these shared set of opportunities and possibilities; it is designed to ensure all facets of this research are meaningful for all stakeholders, not just the end results three years from now.

We invite you to engage with us regularly as we each consider essential factors in the 21st century learning ecosystem. Visit our main project page to see more in depth information about our work and subscribe to our mailing list to be automatically be notified about new content. Share this blog and other content with those you work with. Feel free to use the Twitter hashtag #21CLEO when you do. We will be presenting at multiple conferences, stay tuned for times and dates of the conferences.