

Synthesising New Pedagogies for Deep Learning with Transformative Learning Theory and the  
QEP for Meaningful Practices in the Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 Program

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## **ABSTRACT**

Synthesising New Pedagogies for Deep Learning with Transformative Learning Theory and the QEP for Meaningful Practices in the Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 Program

Sarah Simon

In this thesis I critically examine New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) to assess its compatibility with Transformative Learning Theory and Constructivism, one of the grounding theories of the Quebec Education Plan (QEP). This thesis explores how NPDL and the QEP's Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 (SELA2) program can be brought together to create deeper, transformative, student-centred learning experiences for students in Québec. This thesis aims to establish common themes of the aforementioned theories and to propose a conceptual framework and outline some practical applications for SELA2 teachers in order to address critical 21st Century skills as well as subject-specific competency development outlined in the SELA2 program. Furthermore, this thesis addresses the complexity of educational change and asserts that the proximity of Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 teachers affords them with the profound power to affect change in instruction. It is my stance that providing students with more opportunities to engage in the development of 21st Century skills grounded in the principles of NPDL can open the door for transformation. The proposed framework and the use of applications such as those elaborated on in this thesis, educators can promote deep and more meaningful learning that can lay the groundwork for transformative learning experiences.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to Blake, Jayde and Ethan.

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# **Chapter One: Introduction, Problem Statement, and Outline of the Theories and Frameworks used in the Study**

## **Introduction and Background**

As a Secondary English Language Arts - Cycle 2 (hereafter SELA2 will be used) teacher, I am aware of the impact that my approaches to teaching, understanding of student learning, and how I reflect on these within the context of my practice have on my students. I often consult pedagogical frameworks and learning theories to adopt new methods with the aim of better-preparing learners for life beyond the classroom. However, this has proven to be a challenging endeavour. While I believe in the importance of providing opportunities for students to consider their perspectives or develop alternative and new understandings of themselves or the world, it is as if I am immersed in a battle between curriculum standards and expected outcomes, and deeper, more meaningful learning experiences. The reality is that the standardised assessments at the end of students' academic journeys often steer the direction of learning and assessment. Many teachers feel the need to "teach to the test" for student success. Furthermore, the pressure of student success has only become more pervasive in recent years as learning gaps have been accentuated by the nature of schooling since the spring of 2020. What's more, the literature suggests that the current state of education does not adequately meet the social, economic, and personal needs of today's students (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 3; Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 505).

This is an issue of which students seem to be well aware. Teaching in a high school since 2006 has shown me that students are often eager to share their opinions and appreciation, or lack thereof, for schooling, after all, they are important stakeholders who are afforded the opportunity to experience all the wonderful and not so wonderful aspects of the system. Over time, there has

been a shift in the concerns being expressed by students. Anecdotally within recent years, students are seemingly more informed, involved, and concerned with their education than they were in the earlier years of my career. Where students used to casually complain about their boring lessons or unfair teachers, they are now writing passionate pieces about the inadequacies of a system that they feel is not making the most of its incredible potential.

In 2004, the Gouvernement du Québec Ministère de l'Éducation introduced a new educational plan for the province's youth sector — education for primary and secondary level students. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, the Québec Educational Program (hereafter QEP will be used) pledged wide-ranging changes in how students would be educated. A competency-based approach to the development and evaluation of student learning would extend beyond subject-specific learning. While each discipline would now focus on subject-specific competencies, interdisciplinary learning objectives provide links between content from multiple subject areas and allow for the progression of the *Cross-Curricular Competencies* within the contexts of the *Broad Areas of Learning*. The QEP promised to activate student engagement and to better prepare youth for the changing world.

However, regardless of the long list of positive implications of this progressive, student-centred curriculum with well-defined learning progressions and expectations, the program offered little in terms of practical applications. Despite the best efforts of educators, instruction methods and practices are often incongruous with the intended outcomes stipulated in the QEP. Without a basis in the pedagogy to support the new curriculum, teachers were prone to fall back on teacher-centred approaches to learning — approaches that can lead to increased student disengagement.

This problem serves as the *raison d'être* for Michael Fullan and associates' work on how to change educational systems to promote more authentic, relevant and meaningful learning for all students through an educational movement which aims to help youth sector educators find strategies to adopt more progressive pedagogies within various educational contexts. NPDL asserts that the current state of education does not adequately meet the social, economic, and personal needs of students of the 21st Century and that educational practices are not equipping the students with the tools necessary to navigate the rapidly changing workforce, and increasingly interconnectedness of our time, nor is it engaging students in the way that it ought to be (Fullan, 2013; Fullan & Donnelly, 2013; Fullan, Gardner & Drummy, 2019; Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, Gardner, 2020; Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018; Thiers, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020).

In 2017, the Lester B. Pearson School Board began promoting NPDL to its educators through annual mandated workshops organized by the school board, the establishment of NPDL leadership committees within each school, and voluntary attendance at various local and global NPDL conferences. With this initiative, educators were being asked to reconsider their approaches to student learning. Moving forward a few years, the global pandemic was a period of exceptional strain on the educational system and exposed many cracks. However, it also provided a wonderful opportunity to reimagine education. During this time, educators were forced to adapt to new ways of teaching and working with students. Despite the many difficulties of such rapid and pervasive changes to education, the pandemic provided an opportunity for growth and reflection. Many educators had to adapt to new methods, learn new skills, and reconsider how they approach curriculum and practice to re-engage students in their learning. Following the first years of the pandemic, the Lester B. Pearson School Board leadership has

moved away from actively promoting NPDL. However, the need to reconsider how we engage our students remains unchanged.

NPDL argues that student disengagement is the crisis facing education today and that there is a moral imperative to shift away from teacher-centred pedagogies. While the QEP calls on educators to deviate from teacher-centred learning to adequately prepare students for the realities of the 21st Century (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 16), it is still evident that these practices persist in varying levels and degrees across the province. Therefore, validating NPDL's assertion that the current state of education is not adequately meeting the social, economic, and personal needs of students in the 21st century (Fullum, Quinn, and McEachen, 2018, p.3). The NPDL literature proposes that students are not being equipped with the tools necessary to navigate the rapidly changing workforce and the increasing interconnectedness of the time, thus resulting in students who express sentiments of disengagement and alienation. A study cited in the NPDL literature to defend this argument revealed that student interest in school decreased to 39% by the eleventh grade (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p.3). The solution they propose lies in a shift in how young people are educated. One of the key pedagogical principles outlined in the NPDL is the need to step away from teacher-centred learning which promotes the passive reception of information and a move toward student-centred practices which allow for learners to assume active roles in processing and applying information and skills. NPDL calls for praxis and pedagogy which support and activate deep, meaningful learning grounded in their four-layer Deep Learning Framework to prepare students for the diverse and dynamic needs of the 21st Century (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 34).

NPDL aims to help youth sector educators develop strategies to adopt more progressive approaches grounded in authentic learning within various educational contexts. The creators of this approach assert that it is not a change in program they are promoting, but rather, an integrative pedagogy with the focus on the process rather than the product. The philosophy is not about throwing away what teachers already know about effective teaching, but about applying another level of depth to how educators think about effective practices and pedagogy (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 83). The NPDL approaches are intended to help educators provide student with “real world” learning that is relevant, engaging, and personalised based on the principle that education should help students increase achievement, self-knowledge and self-confidence, develop relationships and deepen agency to effect positive change in the world (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 9). The NPDL literature calls for students to assume active roles in processing and applying information and skills through individual and collaborative learning while leveraging digital technology as a means to accelerate these processes (Fullan, 2013; Fullan & Donnelly, 2013; Fullan, Gardner & Drummy, 2019; Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, Gardner, 2020; Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018; Thiers, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020).

To have this impact on student learning, teachers must reflect on their current and effective pedagogical practices as well as on those that are new and innovative and should develop a mastery in learning and evaluation (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 83). Students and teachers are to become co-learners and co-designers of instruction. This affords students more agency. As students develop more agency, they become more actively involved in learning how to learn (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018). Therefore, teachers are not to act as simple conveyors of information, but to assume the role of activators in knowledge acquisition and

application. As an activator, the teacher becomes a learning partner with their students. They act as culture builder, collaborator, and change agent within the classroom. With a focus on relationship-building, teachers become accelerators for student learning (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 61).

*Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World* (2018), outlines four key criteria for learning design to promote deep learning: pedagogical practices, learning partnerships, learning environments, and leveraging digital. Additionally, it stipulates six competencies, the 6 Cs of deep learning (Character, Citizenship, Communication, Critical thinking and problem solving, Collaboration, and Creativity and imagination) with evaluation criteria for the purposes of inspiring deep learning. These competencies are based on developing skills required for the 21st Century (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, pp. 16-17).

Many of the concepts and arguments outlined in NPDL are familiar, however the authors are not claiming that they are presenting revolutionary ideas, but rather a revamping of constructivist pedagogies to reinvigorate a tired system. Understandably, this is not an easy undertaking as it involves initiating and sustaining progressive educational movements, but it can be accomplished. In the SELA2 classroom, there are many opportunities to re-inspire engagement.

### **The Problem**

Seemingly, adopting NPDL will address the problem of increasingly disengaged students and relevance in the system. However, integrating the NPDL approach into current curriculum standards is a complex endeavour. The NPDL literature highlights the complexity of initiating educational change. They argue that for this movement to fully take force there must be a whole system change whereby all stakeholders - policymakers, administrators and leaders, educators,

students, as well as the community combine forces to actively change and re-engage in the educational system. As inspiring and hopeful as this seems, shifts in the educational philosophy at the ministerial level are slow and complex processes. Furthermore, it is unclear what changes will be made at that level in the near future. Therefore, the immediate responsibility to promote the NPDL lies with the school board administration and its teachers. Meanwhile, teachers still must work within the mandated curriculum guidelines stipulated in the QEP and must be considerate of the ministerial expectations for the evaluation of learning. Therefore, it begs the question: can this even be done?

I believe that education, and particularly the SELA2 program, could do so much more for students within the existing context. The next question is who is responsible for initiating this change? This is a difficult question to answer. Literature concerning the issue makes it clear that educational reform is a complex issue pertaining to a complex system (Joksimovic & Manci, 2018). Whole system change involves all stakeholders. All parties, especially policymakers and administration would be remiss not to appreciate the complexity that this solution requires. However, the literature also shows that teachers serve as a vital role in the success or failure of educational reform. Their proximity to the problems, solutions and everything else in between make them key actors and agents for educational change. Furthermore, educational reform cannot exist without a vision. As Malison et al. (2011) discuss, there is a need to confront the issues within the system that require adaptation. Confronting these issues is an essential step in developing a vision for change. There are methods that educators can adopt to balance curriculum requirements while facilitating relevant learning opportunities. However, doing so can be challenging. NPDL asserts that their philosophy is not a change in program, but rather an approach to an integrative pedagogy that changes the way we think about education. Therefore,



through this lens, the SELA2 program has the powerful potential to activate deep, meaningful, and transformative learning experiences for our students. The challenge however lies in discovering these links and bridging these theories and guidelines to best prepare students for the realities of life in the 21st Century.

### **Overarching Aim of the Thesis**

The overarching aims of the thesis are to explore *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*, Transformative Learning Theory, and Constructivism (the pedagogical philosophy of the QEP) in order to explore and propose a framework for deep, meaningful learning and practical applications in the SELA2 classroom.

### **Objectives**

1. Critically analyze the *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* approach to gauge the extent to which it is compatible with Constructivism, the guiding philosophy of the Education et Enseignement Supérieur Québec, and with transformative learning theory.
2. Outline a conceptual framework for the application in the classroom and synthesize the best practices and approaches to learning for SELA2 teachers to employ *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* while meeting the curriculum criteria of the QEP.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is “new” in *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*?
  - a. How does the *New Pedagogies* approach compare to Transformative Learning Theory, and Constructivism (the QEP/ SELA2)?

2. How can *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* and the QEP SELA2 program be brought together to create deeper, transformative, student-centred learning experiences for SELA2 students in Québec?
  - a. How can the *New Pedagogies* approach work in the competency-based curriculum of the QEP's SELA2 program?

### **Organization of the Paper**

The thesis will be organised into three chapters:

1. Background and problem statement, Objectives, Research Questions, brief outline of *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*, Transformative Learning Theory, QEP- SELA 2, and Constructivism
2. Literature review - *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*, Transformative Learning Theory, QEP, and Constructivism  
Synthesis of secondary sources/ conceptual framework for SELA2.
3. Practical applications, implications and recommendations for Deeper Learning and transformative learning in SELA2

### **Summary of the Chapter**

The preceding section has elaborated on the background and the context for the research goals for this thesis. It has established the problem facing youth sector education, the overarching aim of the research, the objectives and research questions that will be addressed. In the proceeding chapter I will present a review of the literature pertaining to NPDL, Constructivism, and Transformative Learning Theory. I will critically analyse the *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* approach to gauge the extent to which it is compatible with Constructivism, the guiding philosophy of the Education et Enseignement Supérieur Québec, and with transformative

learning theory to explore How the NPDL approach compares to Transformative Learning Theory, and Constructivism within the context of the QEP's SELA2 program.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review of the Québec Education Plan, New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, Constructivism and Transformative Learning Theory**

### **Introduction**

Preparing our youth for the realities of the world in the 21st Century presents challenges, but also immense opportunities. Today's students are digital natives, as such, they learn differently than previous generations. Technology has permeated nearly every aspect of their lives. It bestows extensive access to information and has allowed people to connect with others from all over the world in ways that would have been unimaginable decades ago. Therefore, today's students have developed different needs and expectations for education. Despite this pronounced change in students' needs and ways of knowing, many education systems have not been able to adapt to the pace of such rapid changes. While interpreting this phenomenon is intricate, it nevertheless must be acknowledged that change is complex and there is no simple path to education reform. The New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) literature posits that despite the complexity of educational reform, educators like me are presented with powerful opportunities to effect meaningful change and must grasp them.

With the understanding that embarking on educational change is complex, there are many factors which must be negotiated and many stakeholders who must assume active and engaged roles in the process. However, the role that the teacher plays in this undertaking is vital. *Proximity Theory* reminds us that the factors closest to the outcome will have the strongest influence on it. Therefore, teachers' proximity to the outcome can have a great impact on instilling reforms in curriculum and pedagogy (Muijs, 2010). Furthermore, the literature argues that the role that teachers play in the classroom ought to evolve to one that is more relevant for the needs of the 21st century learner. Traditional classroom methods are being called into

question. The discourse suggests that there is a need to shift away from practices that rely heavily on teacher-centred instruction and on the passive reception, memorization and regurgitation of information. It is argued that there must be a focus on adopting Constructivist practices that place the student at the centre of learning and that allows learners to assume active roles in processing and applying information and skills (Stover & Holland, 2017). Many educational thinkers are calling for pedagogies to be adopted that support, inspire and facilitate deep, meaningful learning whereby teachers transform their role in the classroom and allow for more critical thinking, collaboration and communication, as well as the leveraging of technology to prepare students for the diverse and dynamic needs of the 21st Century. These notions, however, are not new in the discourse concerning student learning. Constructivist approaches to education place the child at the centre of learning and call teachers to act not as simple conveyors of information, but as facilitators in knowledge acquisition and application. Additionally, teachers must also strive to engage creative, conscientious, empathetic global citizens who can think critically. While there are valid arguments that call on policy-makers and administrators to facilitate and support these changes, the role of the educator in the classroom is critical. Employing Constructivist and Transformative Learning Theory practices alongside the pedagogies outlined in NPDL can be instrumental in informing teaching practices and inspire deep, transformative Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 (SELA2) learning for today's students.

In this chapter I will outline the fundamental features of the Québec Education Plan, review the literature pertaining to NPDL, Constructivism, and Transformative Learning Theory. I will critically analyze the NPDL approach to gauge the extent to which it is compatible with Constructivism, the guiding philosophy of the *Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur Québec*, and

with transformative learning theory to explore how the NPDL approach compares to Transformative Learning Theory, and Constructivism within the context of the QEP's SELA2 program.

### **Fundamental Features of the Québec Education Plan (QEP)**

In 2004, the Gouvernement du Québec Ministère de l'Éducation introduced a new educational plan for the province's youth sector. The new Québec Educational Plan (QEP) was introduced into secondary schools in September 2007. The program outlined competency-based learning grounded in a common curriculum for the purpose of developing skills essential for the 21st Century. Furthermore, it accentuated the need for differentiated instruction and practices to meet the needs and interests of all students (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007).

As we near the end of the second decade since its introduction, it is to be expected that there are aspects of the QEP that need updating to meet the needs within the current educational context. However, the central philosophy, dominant themes, and the progressive ideologies of the program are still relevant for today's learners and arguably truly make it a "curriculum for the 21st Century" (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 1). The QEP states:

People of the 21st century are confronted with increasingly complex issues, and the ability to integrate knowledge and transfer it to changing contexts is essential. Society expects more from schools than it did in the past. They must not only ensure that as many students as possible succeed in school, but also prepare all students to live successful lives and to contribute to social progress. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 1)

The Secondary Cycle Two program was implemented in September 2007. In order to meet this guiding principle of providing Québec's youth with a modern, relevant educational program, it outlined four major characteristics. These are: to target the development of subject-specific competencies, to integrate all subjects through the Broad Areas of Learning, to target cross-curricular competency development through Cross-Curricular Competencies, and for the individual and collective choices for both educators and students (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan*, n.p.).

Cognitivism, Constructivism, Social Constructivism are the learning theories that ground the approaches to learning outlined in the program. They describe the processes that enable learners to incorporate and apply new knowledge, act and construct meaning, and stress the importance of social interactions on thought and learning. These learning theories were not new concepts at the time of the QEP's publication, but the intention was to draw on them to inform and reform how educators implement the program. Furthermore, the aim was not to limit the range of pedagogical approaches teachers may employ, but rather to establish the orientation of the educational system grounded in meaningful, student-centred approaches. The program also stipulated that it is the role of schools and staff to define how the program is executed (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 16). It is here that there is a gap between the intention of the program and the current reality. Educators must consider that competencies cannot be taught, rather they are skills which students develop with the guidance and support of educators. Therefore, teachers still serve a vital role in the education of their students in regard to their expertise in their disciplines. Through differentiated learning and diversified instruction, guidance, and support, teachers act as facilitators of learning.

## **Aims of the QEP & School's Mission**

The QEP places the student at the centre of the program. It is the responsibility of educators to ensure that three central objectives are met to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: 1) That students are afforded with the opportunity to construct an integrated world-view, 2) that students develop a strong personal identity, and 3) that they are empowered (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 23). Through the development of these objectives, educators are expected to help students examine and develop an understanding of the world and themselves, exercise critical judgement, develop intellectual curiosity and empower students to find their voice and sense of agency (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 7-8). It is also the mandate of the school to foster the development of students who are well-educated through instruction in a knowledge-based world, active citizens who are socialized in a pluralistic world, and competent workers whereby they can function autonomously, display adaptability, and demonstrate competency in diverse skills and who are qualified for a changing world (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 1).

To meet the aforementioned learning objectives, the QEP asserts that educators assume the role of facilitator of learning. As a facilitator of learning, educators are able to guide students through learning in a way that balances curriculum objectives and student choice. The QEP stresses the idea that learning should promote success for all students in an environment that highlights the formal, academic nature of competency development while also teaching students how to think for themselves and develop a sense of autonomy. Through the development of competencies, the program highlights the need to focus on the development of skills which allow



students to develop and construct their knowledge over the transmission of knowledge. Furthermore, learning should be integrated. Students should construct their understanding and knowing by working through multi-dimensional problems and integrated projects. Additionally, evaluation should be seen as a catalyst for learning. How teachers structure the evaluation of these skills should serve to promote learning. Therefore, students' progress is to be monitored annually while respecting the learning continuums throughout each cycle of the program (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 3-15).

The Broad Areas of Learning and the Cross Curricular Competencies outlined in the QEP are part of the development of the whole student. They afford educators with the opportunity to promote learning that is integrated within the development of subject-specific competencies, multi-disciplinary and for the development of essential themes and competencies needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Essential Themes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – The Broad Areas of Learning**

The Broad Areas of Learning are divided into the five themes of: 1) Health and Well-Being, 2) Personal and Career Planning, 3) Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, 4) Media Literacy, and 5) Citizenship and Community Life. The intention of the Broad Areas of Learning are to provide students with the opportunity to make learning authentic by helping students to establish connections between their learning and the world around them. They provide students with transferable knowledge and skills that can be applied to situations they will face outside of the school (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: Broad Areas of Learning*, pp. 1-2).

The Broad Areas of Learning establish contexts based on authentic themes which ground subject-specific and cross-curricular competency development and therefore cannot be associated with just a single subject-area. They provide educators, regardless of discipline, with an element of a framework to design learning that is based on contemporary themes and issues pertinent for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They encourage free and conscious choice and also serve to help students examine real-world questions, construct an identity and worldview, serve to motivate and support students and facilitate in establishing connections between instrumental learning and the world (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: Broad Areas of Learning*, pp.1-3).

While there is no formal evaluation for the Broad Areas of learning, they do establish a framework for instruction and are therefore should be factored in the evaluation of competencies (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: Broad Areas of Learning*, p.15). Therefore, how they are approached and evaluated in these terms are left up to the schools and educators themselves. However, the QEP does stipulate that the school's educational project provides an ideal context for ensuring that these themes are covered in its educational action (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: Broad Areas of Learning*, p. 4).

### **Essential Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Cross-Curricular Competencies**

While the Broad Areas of Learning establish the contemporary themes, Cross-Curricular Competencies establish the essential skills necessary for the development of the whole child. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 3: Cross-Curricular Competencies*, pp. 1-2). The nine Cross-Curricular Competencies are organised into four categories of essential skills: intellectual competencies, methodological competencies, personal

and social competencies, and communication-related competencies. Not one competency is deemed to be more essential than another. Rather, they complement each other and work in unison to help students integrate their learning as well as to develop essential intellectual, social, and emotional skills (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 3: Cross-Curricular Competencies*, p.1). Furthermore, they assist in adding complexity to learning situations. The Cross-Curricular Competencies, like the Broad Areas of Learning, are not intended to be taught in isolation. They should be used with intention in all areas of student learning. Furthermore, it is important that educators avoid compartmentalising learning objectives and subject-specific competency development and adopt a more cohesive approach to education whereby educational aims include all elements of the QEP and highlights how learning across subject areas is connected and complementary (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 4: Subject Areas*, p. 1).

## **Secondary English Language Arts Cycle 2 (SELA2) – Subject-Specific Competency**

### **Development**

Secondary Cycle Two is a critical time for students to consolidate and integrate previous learning and begin to consider their lives beyond formal education and play a role in facilitating student development of a student's identity (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 4: Subject Areas*, p.3). The SELA2 program contextualises the Broad Areas of Learning by providing opportunities for students to explore real-world issues that relate to these areas. In terms of the Cross-Curricular Competencies, SELA2 outlines how these skills are developed in the context of language instruction. Additionally, it offers an explanation of how the skills developed in English Language Arts are integrated and woven in the other disciplines

(Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p. 3-5).

SELA2 is an integrated language arts program that is “first and foremost a literacy program.” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p.1). This section of the program outlines curriculum standards that focus on the development of functional literacy skills through the development of the three subject-specific competencies: *Competency 1 – Uses language/talk to communicate and learn* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p. 15), *Competency 2 – reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p.35), and *Competency 3 – produces texts for personal and social purposes* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p. 50). However, the objectives extend beyond the development of functional literacy skills. This integrated language arts program emphasises the importance of critical literacy. Through reading, writing, and communication, students will be given the means to exercise their voice and discover how being able to communicate effectively contributes to active participation in society. SELA2 also develops critical thinking skills by helping students to “make intellectual and aesthetic judgements, raise questions, articulate their thoughts and respect the ideas of others.” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p.1). By the end of Cycle Two, students should have acquired the skills for each of the English Language Arts Competencies.

The SELA2 competencies are both independent and complementary of each other. Students develop these competencies through flexible pedagogical contexts that allow for

students to utilise and apply resources and skills through active, student-centred learning (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p. 5).

The SELA2 program calls for integrated Teaching-Learning-Evaluation (TLE) contexts to provide the framework for the planning of learning and evaluation situations that integrate the SELA2 competencies as well as the other objectives and aims of the program. Through regular and sustained learning and evaluation situations, students read, interpret, and produce a variety of texts. They are also afforded opportunities to work both individually and collaboratively and contribute to the classroom community. Furthermore, through differentiation and the allowance for students to make learning decisions that reflect their interests and individual needs, educators establish the TLE required for student success (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, pp. 5-7).

When designing learning within the context of the program and subject-specific 2outcomes, it is imperative that educators adopt a “pedagogy based on situations”. Depending on the learning objectives, these may be shorter, detailed-orientated, and repetitive, or more open and spread over a longer period of time. In both cases, these learning situations should be used as a method for students to display their competency. The aim is to create meaningful learning activities, tasks and problems that consider the resources available, provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in context and allow for opportunities for reflection (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, pp. 18-19).

## **Critiques of the QEP**

While there is merit to the value that educators are content creators and designers, this can also lead to problems with the implementation of the program. Although the QEP does stipulate that educators must draw on higher-order cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p.16), educators require stronger foundations in Constructivist learning theory.

The QEP states that: “In a complex and changing social context, providing all students with the best possible education requires a constant readjustment of educational practices.” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Forward*). For this to occur, educators need not only to have a strong foundation of the learning theories which form the basis of the program, but also to be provided with guidance and support in how to implement the program. Arguably, minimising the prescription of how to implement a program is beneficial for the educators and the learners insofar as it allows for instruction to meet the needs and interests of the students and highlights the professional independence of educators to make appropriate decisions based on their context, it does leave room for educators to interpret the guidelines and requirements of the program differently, even incorrectly. Arguably, the root of this issue is not the nature of the program itself, but more so an uneven understanding of Constructivist methods.

Another issue is the age of the program. Despite the progressive ideologies of the QEP after two decades, it has yet to achieve its full potential, an issue that only becomes more evident as the program continues to age. There are elements which are outdated and need revision. Since 2003, there have been some revisions and supplemental publications, however the program is

starting to show its age, particularly in terms of the contexts of learning provided in the Broad Areas of Learning.

Many of the fundamental philosophies of the QEP are grounded in Constructivist methods. While the program promotes Constructivist teaching practices, it outlines very little in terms of practical applications to help teachers navigate the expectations of the program. This exposes a gap in the intention and implementation of the program.

## **Constructivism**

### **Definition**

Since the 1990s, Constructivism, a branch of Cognitivism, has been one of the dominant epistemologies exploring the nature of learning and has been embraced by countless educational reforms and has served as the foundation for several recent teaching methods including: problem-based learning, authentic instruction, and computer supported collaborative learning (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 21). At a time when learning theory focused on external objectives, such as one's behaviour to serve as the indicator of learning, Constructivist Learning Theory emerged. This theory recognized the important role of the learner and their agency in cognitive processes (Gash, 2014, p. 310).

Constructivism is composed of differing, valid perspectives. Since Piaget's introduction of the term "constructivist epistemology," the literature pertaining to this theory has been explored by many writers and has resulted in a number of related concepts and interpretations (Gash, 2014, p. 310). Three perspectives of Constructivism are: **Exogenous** - Whereby acquiring knowledge is based on how the learner relates to experiences and is influenced by their environment. Knowledge is accurate based on how it relates to reality. This perspective is particularly relevant when aiming to understand how learners develop skills and competency;

**Endogenous** - whereby knowledge is not acquired directly from interactions with the world but from previously acquired knowledge. What one knows and learns does not reflect the environment, rather it is developed through the process of making connections and comparisons. The work of Piaget fits into this perspective, and **Dialectical** - Knowledge is acquired from the interactions between people and their environments. Knowledge is derived from the contradictions in one's mind as they interact with their environment. The work of Vygotsky fits into this perspective. This perspective is pertinent when designing learning situations that challenge learners and for exploring how peer collaboration and interactions influence learning and development (Schunk, 2012, pp. 232-233).

Constructivist thinking shifted toward Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as the discourse shifted toward the importance of social support and the social environment as facilitators of learning and development. He emphasised the critical role that socially meaningful activity played on how people construct meaning and stressed the importance that interactions, cultural-historical and individual factors played in this process. Another important contribution was Vygotsky's discussion of the Zone of Proximal Development and instructional scaffolding. These concepts explore the range in which a person is capable of learning with the guidance, support and collaboration of others. These processes require metacognitive practices of planning, checking, evaluating and reflection (Schunk, 2012, pp. 240-243). Vygotsky discussed the role that instructional scaffolding plays in learning processes. Vygotsky proposed that there are five functions of instructional scaffolding: 1) provide support, 2) function as a tool, 3) extend the range of learner, 4) permit attainment of tasks not otherwise possible, and 5) use selectively as needed. Teachers should continually scaffold learning to keep learners in the Zone of Proximal Development (Schunk, 2012, p. 246).



Constructivism conceives of learning as a mental activity. Unlike cognitivists who see the mind as a reference tool and believe that knowledge can be mapped onto the learner, constructivists believe that the mind is a filter through which one's experiences create personal meaning structures and that knowledge and learning are not waiting for discovery or can be acquired by the learner, rather it is constructed by the learner (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p.16; Schunk, 2012, p. 230). Constructivism emphasises the importance of the intersection of the learner and their experiences and asserts that knowledge is a result of how one's experiences shape meaning construction (Gash, 2014, p. 310; Jonassen, 1991, as cited in Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p.15). Therefore, the interaction of individuals and situations are integral in the construction of knowledge. The theory assumes that individuals, behaviours, and environments interact in a reciprocal fashion and that people are active learners and develop personal knowledge and meaning through these interactions and experiences (Schunk, 2012, p. 231).

When considering how young people learn, Constructivism posits that children, who think and see the world differently than adults, seek consistency and look to form connections between what they already know, and the new ideas and information being presented. This circular and repetitive process, which is influenced and modified by internal and external structures, is how students construct their knowledge (Schunk, 2012, pp. 236-239).

### **Constructivism and Instructional Design**

Constructivism proposes that learning is active and takes place through the exploration of complex topics. Through this, learners are encouraged to construct and validate new meaning (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p. 18). When considering instructional design within the context of Constructivist Learning Theory, educators must consider how students learn, their role in that learning, as well as the contexts which support learning. It underscores the importance of an

integrated, cross-curricular curriculum whereby learning is individualised and allows for the exploration of topics from multiple perspectives. Moreover, it calls for a shift from traditional passive learning teaching methods and for the adoption of active learning situations (Schunk, 2012, p. 231). Furthermore, learning should be situated in real-world, contexts and authentic tasks. Real-world learning is learning that is active, purposeful interaction and use of knowledge in real situations. There is limited focus on recall and rote memorization. Rather, students learn through active mental processing (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 16).

An essential objective of constructivist teaching to challenge students to think critically. Teachers need to find the resources and ask the questions to push students to investigate (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p.19). A constructivist educator makes ideas understandable from a learner's point of view by understanding that learners make sense of new experiences by relating them to their own previous experiences or frames of reference. Deeper learning does not come from memorization and recall, but through active cognitive restructuring involving making connections to real-world situations and contexts. Constructivist educators involve students in active learning and facilitate learning experiences that promote cognitive dissonance by challenging student thinking resulting in a rearrangement of their beliefs (Schunk, 2012, p. 236). Learning is a continual process of building upon connections and lessons and from the outside world. Teachers facilitate this learning by continuously probing understanding and by helping students work through and resolve cognitive dissonance (Ertmer & Newby, 1993 p. 18). When students are confronted with environmental inputs that are incongruous with their current mental structures they experience cognitive dissonance. The role of the teacher is to provide learning opportunities in which incongruity will occur (Schunk, 2012, p. 240).

Teachers must continually reflect on their practices to ensure that they are acting as facilitators of learning (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, pp. 16-17). The Constructivist educator facilitates learning through guidance, modelling and coaching. They present multiple perspectives of a topic or issue whereby collaborative learning can be employed to encourage the development and sharing of differing perspectives. Learning is structured to allow for social negotiations of views through debate, discussion, and evidence giving, and by providing students with opportunities for reflection (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p. 19). Teacher guidance and feedback, especially while working in the Zone of Proximal Development and during periods of cognitive dissonance is critical to student learning (Schunk, 2012, p. 240).

### **Main Tenets of Constructivist Education**

#### **Authentic Learning**

For instruction to have the most impact, educators should aspire to provide students with authentic learning situations that promote active learning in real-world contexts. Situated cognition is the premise that learning, or cognitive processes, are located, or situated, in application and that learning does not take place solely in the mind. Authentic learning situations have a direct impact on students' motivation to learn. Furthermore, instructional practices should model the desired outcomes that educators have for their students. (Schunk, 2012, pp. 233-234).

#### **Active Learning**

Active learning involves providing for learning experiences that are challenging and force students to reconsider what they know or believe to be true. Tied to this is the importance of reflection and the development of metacognitive skills to reinforce the new meanings learners are constructing. It is also important to note the value of how learning is developed through social contexts. Educators who provide opportunities for students to collaborate and share ideas

are providing students with opportunities to model and observe each other and which leads to improved confidence in their skill development and learning (Schunk, 2012, p. 235).

### **Learner-Centred Approaches**

Constructivist teaching calls for learner-centred approaches that promote discovery inquiry-based, discussion-based, reflective, and peer-assisted learning. As stated in Shunk (2012):

The goal of constructivist learning environments is to provide rich experiences that encourage students to learn. Constructivist classrooms teach big concepts using much student activity, social interaction, and authentic assessments. Students' ideas are avidly sought, and, compared with traditional classes, there is less emphasis on superficial learning and more emphasis on deeper understanding. [ . . . ] Some instructional methods that fit well with constructivism are discovery learning, inquiry teaching, peer-assisted learning, discussions and debates, and reflective teaching. (p. 275)

As such, the goal of instruction should not be on the transmission of information, but rather helping students develop skills that allow them to be better able to interpret, explore and apply information. Furthermore, practice, knowledge, and context are essential for meaningful and lasting learning (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). This is particularly true for our students who are now digital natives. Ertmer and Newby (2013) posit that young people learn differently than they did before, that technology has rewired the way they process information and how they learn. As a result, learners prefer to learn by doing because it allows for a deeper, more authentic, and relevant learning experience.

## **Critiques and Drawback of Constructivist Learning Theory**

While many valid contributions to meaningful instruction have derived from Constructivist theories, it has been argued that there are some issues regarding learning that the theory fails to address. One of the criticisms is the lack of consistency in the interpretations of constructivism as well as the emphasis on the idea that all forms of knowledge are justifiable because they are constructed by learners, especially if they reflect societal consensus. Phillips (1995, as cited in Schunk, 2012) argues that “educators cannot accept this premise in good conscience because education demands that we inculcate values such as honesty, fairness, and responsibility in our students regardless of whether societal constituencies deem them important.” (p. 234). Additionally, constructivism downplays the roles that genetics, cognitive structures, and development play on one’s ability to acquire certain knowledge and skills (Schunk, 2012, p. 234; Genovese, 2003, p. 133). Genovese (2003) argues drawing on Piaget’s theory of development, many Constructivists have assumed that adolescents’ intrinsic motivation to learn is always possible. Many higher-level academic tasks are in fact “biologically secondary abilities” (Geary and Bjorkland, 2000, as cited in Genovese, 2003, p. 127). Further, Genovese (2003) posits:

Because constructivists assume that all learning unfolds as part of the developmental process they often endorse student-centred approaches to education at all levels, assume that intrinsic motivation is always possible, and downplay the importance of acquiring a knowledge base. (p.133)

## **Transformative Learning Theory**

Transformative learning is grounded in Constructivist assumptions that meaning exists within an individual, and that we each develop our own personal meaning through experiences

and validate them through interactions with others (Cranton, 2016, p.18). Transformative learning is a widely debated theory of adult learning. The literature regarding this topic is vast, and multiple contributions and interpretations have been made since Mezirow's seminal work over four decades ago. At the core of Mezirow's theory is the aim to help individuals challenge ingrained and often unconscious frames of reference to stimulate both a mental and behavioural shift (Christie et al., 2015, p. 11). Mezirow (2012) defines transformative learning as:

a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated. (as cited in Cranton, 2016, p. 2)

According to Brookfield (2000, as cited in Magro, 2012) "an act of learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts." (p. 315). Benne (as cited in Amend & Benne, 2012) shares a similar concept of transformative learning defining it as the "irreversible (emergent) process of sufficiently deep creative change in the mental structure and consciousness of any living system." (p. 27). This change alters perceptions and therefore affects behaviour and environment. Comparably, Hoggan (2016, as cited in Hoggan, Malkki, Finnegan, 2017) describes transformative learning as the "processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises, and interacts with the world." (p. 49) People make meaning from their experiences—how they see and experience the world. As a result, a series of expectations form and serve as the filter through which one experiences life. Cranton (2016) contends that when something doesn't fit, the options are to either reject or question it. It is the questioning, critical examination, and revision of one's thinking, and action that is defined as Transformational learning (p. 15).

Transformative learning occurs when one encounters alternative perspectives that force prior habits of the mind/perspectives to be called into question. The powerful catalyst which inspires this shift or change is what Mezirow defines as the disorienting dilemma, which is the first of the ten stages of Mezirow's (1981) conceptualization of the theory. A disorienting dilemma need not be a dramatic event, it can also be gradual or the accumulation of everyday occurrences (Cranton, 2016, p. 19).

The ten phases of transformative learning conclude with perspective transformation. Perspective transformation is the structural reorganisation of the way that a person looks at himself and his relationships and takes action to change (Mezirow, 1981, pp. 6-7; Mezirow, 1975, p. 162, as cited in Cranton, 2016, p. 16). Furthermore, much like Mezirow's *disorienting dilemma*, Cranton (2002) and Apte (2009) argue that perspective transformation begins with an "activating event" or an "interruption of a current frame of reference", respectively. Like Mezirow, this event is what sets the transformation in motion and causes the change in perspective in the aforementioned definitions.

Tennant (2005) writes that "transformative education is aimed at promoting awareness and fundamental change at the personal, relational, institutional, and global levels. In doing so, it deploys a range of techniques, processes, and practices aimed at assisting learners to 'work on themselves.'" (p.102) Tennent (2005) explores four broad categories of technologies of the self: *knowing oneself*, *controlling oneself*, *caring for oneself*, and *recreating oneself*. These concepts of self are apparent in the language of transformative learning designs and can be used to critically analyse different designs for transformative learning. Understanding these concepts of the self serve as emphasis for the assumptions made in transformative education.

Dirkx (in Dirkx, Mezirow, Cranton, 2006) proposes that by searching for the meaning in the experiences, one can be confronted with a disorienting dilemma and partake in perspective transformation. Not all meaningful experiences are transformational, but they have the power to be so if they produce profound changes in one's way of being (Dirkx, Mezirow, Cranton, p. 133). Evidently, change is the primary aspect of transformation.

A disorienting dilemma/activating event can challenge one's values and assumptions, and result in conscious raising and a mental and behavioural shift. This change should then inspire more change. Christie and Associates (2015) point out that "the hope of transformative learning is that better individuals will build a better world." (p. 11) and that if students are given the motivation and knowledge and trained to think for themselves, they will become lifelong learners who will effect change.

Another concept focuses on spiritual and personal transformation, rather than a social transformation. Dirkx (in Dirkx, Mezirow, Cranton, 2006) refers to transformational learning as "soul work" (p. 125). He asserts that those who take transformation seriously are interested in 'deep', holistic learning whereby existing notions are challenged. Dirkx focuses on the "inner world" of the learner. This inner world is made up of a variety, often conflicting, messages and perceptions. He argues that the aim for transformative education is to nurture the soul, this inner world. This is accomplished by providing pedagogical experiences geared to integrating the presence of the inner world with the outer world (p. 128).

Gatmon (2012) argues that the creation of holistic transformative learning must focus on nurturing, developing, and exploring the three elements of the "whole person": person in a web of relationships, whole person learning, and the four dimensions of whole person - physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (pp. 172-174). According to Brookfield (2000 as cited in



Magro, p. 315) “an act of learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts.” and further, as mentioned Magro (2012), Mezirow (1981) outlines critical reflection, creativity, self-knowledge, a reverence for life, democratic discourse, and the balance of attaining collective and personal goals as common themes in transformative learning (p. 315). Furthermore, Amend and Benne (2012) suggest that learning, creating, and transforming are intertwined, and that reflection is a critical component and in itself “a form of experience” (p. 17-18).

Educators striving to inspire change must be aware that not all change or meaningful experiences can be considered transformational. True transformation requires some form of interruption or dilemma that results in a permanent and meaningful personal, emotional, cognitive, or behavioural change. It is transformative learning when one responds to that which goes against habits of the mind by reconsidering and revising their belief systems (Cranton, 2016, p. 19).

### **Critiques of Transformative Learning Theory**

Transformative learning is not without its detractors. Cranton (2016), for example, asserts that the theory continues to evolve through the inclusion of new perspectives and calls for a more integrated and unified theory. Hoggan (2012) suggests, the most crucial issue with transformative learning is finding a bridge between the diverse and divergent definitions unifying the theoretical framework. This further complicates the question of whether an educator can in fact lay the groundwork for a transformative experience. Without a clear definition, how can educators accurately ascertain whether transformative learning has in fact taken place?

According to Newman (2012), another flaw in the theory is that verifying transformation can never be accurate as it relies solely on the interpretation of the learners themselves and

simply because they say that they have undergone radical change does not mean that educators can assume that they have. Further, Newman (2012) argues that term transformative learning ought to be abandoned and replaced with the more straightforward, accurate, and likely more realistic term *good learning*. He contends that transformative learning is not unique in the sense that there is nothing “exceptional” about significant change resulting from education (p.38). He posits that perhaps the theory cannot live up to the rhetoric, that it is premature, too lofty, or ambitious—a sentiment supported by Collard and Law (1989) who agree that Mezirow’s theories are premature. They suggest that at best, he presents a fragment of a theory of adult learning and education or self-directed learning (p. 105), and Dirkx (2012) asserts that Newman correctly criticises the field of Transformative Learning for “conceptual and methodological looseness” (p. 404).

Ethical issues are another area of debate regarding the praxis of transformative learning. Educators who wish to act as facilitators of transformation should be mindful of the power dynamics of learning. There is nothing wrong with promoting or setting the groundwork for transformation but outlining it as a learning objective is unethical and quite problematic (Hoggan, Malkki, Finnegan, 2017). Furthermore, there is always a probability that an educator’s goals and/or values will factor in learning design and expected outcomes. Whether the aim for the educator is to prepare students to be contributing members of society and the workforce or to promote democracy and help students become involved aware global citizens, educators are never “value-neutral” (Ettling, 2006). While expecting otherwise is unreasonable, educators, especially those in disciplines that allow for content-creation—such as SELA2, expose students to certain topics, themes, etc. they deem important. While there are good intentions, biases exist.

Educators must consider methods that allow for students to explore their own topics and interests to limit this.

Furthermore, learning is complex and does not take place in a vacuum. No educational design can affect the meaning structures of all the students and not all meaning structures need change. “Scholars should not describe perspective transformation as either having taken place or not, but in terms of the degree to which a change in perspective demonstrates depth, breadth, and relative stability, and thus the extent to which they are transformative” (Hoggan, Malkki, Finnegan, 2017, p. 51). Therefore, it would be unfair for an educator to evaluate transformation as a component of the course objectives seeing that these experiences are not guaranteed and that they often manifest in unique ways depending on the student. Perhaps, the only expectation should be that the educator acts as the facilitator for transformative learning whereby they lay the foundation by providing for the opportunities for transformative learning and by supporting students through their individual processes.

Providing students with rich, meaningful, and authentic learning situations is a way to inspire transformative learning whereas the philosophy of NPDL provides educators with a lens to view curriculum standards and offers a layer of depth to educational practices. Together Transformative learning and NPDL serves as a framework for rich, meaningful, and authentic learning situations needed for potential perspective transformation.

### **New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL)**

NPDL is an educational movement that confronts the crisis in education that is the result of what Fullan and associates argue are some considerable failings in current education systems. NPDL argues that teacher-centred, low-ordered educational practices are outdated, inequitable, and fail to engage and motivate students, nor do they adequately address the needs of the 21st

Century (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018). NPDL seeks to reinvigorate stakeholders at all levels of education to transform the system to one that is equitable, personalised, and inspiring. As such it places the learner at the centre of education thus answering the lack of motivation among today's students. Through NPDL instructional design, education has the potential to be more interesting, meaningful, and authentic for the learner, and can inspire a student's sense of autonomy, perseverance, and belonging. The NPDL instructional design promotes the Six Global Competencies which support and develop skills in critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, all critical skills for the 21st Century (Fullan et al, 2020, p. 8).

One of the core principles of NPDL is the assumption that students have the power to make a difference in the world, and that education has the moral imperative to inspire such changes. Therefore, the goal of education is to prepare students to thrive, apply new thinking to new situations, and change the world. To do so, there must be a shift in the methods used to educate our youth. NPDL calls for a whole systems approach to educational change, but acknowledges that these paradigm shifts, especially at the government level are complex endeavours. This, however, should not deter from the critical need for educational change.

A review of the literature highlights that meaningful change must persist from the middle. Ultimately, there is profound power in proximity. As proximity theory proposes, those closest to the problem can make the strongest contributions to the outcome therefore, those who can affect the most profound change to pedagogical practices are those working within the schools. Elaborating on the unique and powerful role that teachers and administrators serve in effective change in education, NPDL argues that through collective capacity, and an examination of pedagogical practices, educators can act to re-engage today's youth and respond to the moral imperative for schools to place "learning, purpose, and well-being all on the same pedestal"

(Fullan, Gardener & Drummy, 2019, p. 66). Doing so will inspire life-long learners who are motivated and empathetic, and who can use creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative skills to pose solutions, and become agents of change (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Fullan, Gardener & Drummy, 2019; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). The authors further this by examining how education can activate deep learning and inspire and guide students through their personal learning journeys. Though personalised learning is only a small part of the NPDL model (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, xiv), the authors posit that personalization will serve to create equitable education for all. They refer to this as the *equity hypothesis* (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 5). To do this, NPDL emphasises the value of quality, researched-based pedagogy.

Although NPDL does not directly acknowledge its grounding in any particular learning theory, it does assert that teachers who want to start working with NPDL can draw from Constructivism as an approach (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 84). It is evident that Constructivism informs the principles of NPDL. It is critical that educators develop a mastery of learning theory to inform pedagogical practices, yet many educators have limited expertise in educational theory. As Ertmer and Newby (1993) assert,

[t]he way that we define learning and what we believe about the way learning occurs has important implications for situations in which we want to facilitate changes in what people know and/or do. Learning theories provide instructional designers with verified instructional strategies and techniques for facilitating learning as well as the foundation for intelligent strategy selection. Yet many designers are operating under the constraints of a limited theoretical background. (. 1)

Reinspiring educators to adopt holistic, constructivist, and personalised learning methods can have a profound impact for students. Teachers are encouraged to employ real-world, inquiry-based learning contexts that emphasise risk-taking and trial-and-error problem solving to unlock student's passion and curiosity. Furthermore, NPDL calls on teachers to foster learning partnerships to create environments where students feel motivated and supported in their personal learning endeavours. Teachers must also establish defined learning outcomes and incorporate summative and formative assessment strategies (Fullan & Donnelly, 2013).

While NPDL calls for the imperative shift in education at all levels it is not arguing for a complete restructuring in teaching methods and curriculum. Fullan, Quinn & McEachen (2018) propose a synthesis of “old” but effective methods with “new” methods, while discarding methods that are ineffective (p. 83). It is concerned with applying a new lens of depth to the curriculum. Bad policies, wrong testing regimes, growing inequality that those in power try to preserve, and inadequate and uneven investment in public education all serve to impede the success of NPDL. However, perhaps the most impactful barrier are teachers who hold on to the status quo (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018). As such, a teacher's proximity may negatively contribute to the success of NPDL. It is the aim that embracing the NPDL framework will serve to inspire educators to re-evaluate their practices, especially those that are outdated, teacher-centred, and alienating.

To activate *Deep Learning*, Fullan, Quinn and McEachen (2018) outline a comprehensive four-level framework:

**Layer 1:** The defined outcomes as presented in the six global competencies (discussed below) and their progressions.

**Layer 2:** the four elements of learning design - pedagogy, learning environments, learning and the leveraging of digital. The latter two, *NPDL* argues, are new and unique to their vision.

**Layer 3:** Conditions for deep learning.

**Layer 4:** Collaborative inquiry (p. 35).

At the core of the NPDL framework are the six global competencies, the *6 Cs of Deep Learning*. The six global competencies are: *Character, Citizenship, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity* and *Critical Thinking* (Fullan, Gardner & Drummy, 2019; Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, Gardner, 2020; Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018; Quinn et al., 2020). These competencies are not subject-specific, but rather are integrative and pertain to the development of the whole child. They also add a lens of depth to any curriculum, promote instruction that is deep, more meaningful, and authentic, and allow for a holistic approach to education.

### **Using NPDL to Transform Pedagogy**

No longer can we just teach literacy and numeracy; we have to teach higher-order thinking skills to construct knowledge. We must teach not just what to learn, but how to learn which corresponds to not what to teach, but a shift to how to teach (Teo, 2019, p. 171). NPDL outlines a number of elements pertaining to its framework and principles that sets it apart from similar designs. For instance, although the six global competencies are quite similar to other lists of 21st Century skills, NPDL asserts that they differ as theirs offers a more comprehensive, precise, and measurable way to address these skills (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 18). Furthermore, the literature outlines six key features that they assert sets their vision apart from others. These are: 1) *Whole Child - Whole System* which focuses on holistic learning that encourages not just a mastery of content knowledge, but about the development of all aspects of

the learner; 2) *Clarity of Outcomes* through the development of the six global competencies (the *6 Cs of Deep Learning*); 3) *Measurability* with the use of the progression rubrics to measure the development of each of the global competencies; The use of 4) *Common Language* when working with the tools; The model has been 5) *Co-Developed with Practitioners* from around the world who have developed and employed the common framework; and lastly that the NPDL is further developed through 6) *Action Orientation* that strives to build new knowledge on what works in terms of developing strong social connections to change the world (Fullan et al., 2020, pp. 8-9).

The NPDL literature outlines four elements of Learning Design.

**Figure 2.1**

*Four Elements of Learning Design for Deep Learning*

Pedagogical Practices	Learning Partnerships	Learning Environments	Leveraging Digital
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These elements are intended to guide teachers through learning design that allows for the six Global competencies to come into action (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 77). It is of particular importance to delineate the learning design within the context of NPDL and Transformative Learning Theory as a part of how SELA2 educators can begin to design instruction based on learning theories grounded in constructivism.

**Learning Design Element 1: Pedagogical Practices**

Teachers need to be able to select the practices and strategies that help them to scaffold learning experiences, meet the needs and interests of the students, maximise learning, and make learning authentic and meaningful. A wide repertoire of resources are required to do this effectively. Primarily, there should be a focus on the individual needs of students. There is no



one best approach for student success. Teachers must be in tune with their students and their personal and academic needs to do this well (Quinn et al, 2020, p. 61). For this to occur, educators must also become familiar with the *Equity Hypothesis* as outlined in the NPDL literature. The *Equity Hypothesis* proposes that there have been systematic structures in place within education that limit the success and potential for deep learning for some, particularly struggling, students. Deep learning opportunities would serve to engage all students in meaningful learning but could potentially have the greatest impact on those who have been marginalised by the system (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, pp. 23-24).

Pedagogical practices cover a wide array of methods and concepts and must consider the other elements of instructional design (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, p. 82). Educators need a wide repertoire of strategies such as inquiry-based, problem-based, project-based, multidisciplinary learning. Drawing on Constructivism, teachers should fuse proven and emerging practices to allow for student-centred approaches to learning (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, p.85). There are a number of themes in NPDL literature when considering pedagogical practices that support deep learning. Furthermore, there are many that parallel and relate to the ideas and themes in the QEP. Similarly to NPDL, the QEP highlights that there are benefits to fusing “old” pedagogical practices with “new” and more innovative practices to adequately prepare students for the modern world. In the program, it states:

Schools are expected to continue transmitting the knowledge of previous generations, while at the same time helping all students develop skills that will enable them to become well-educated individuals, active citizens and competent workers. In short, we expect the schools to turn out autonomous people, capable of adapting in a world marked by the exponential growth of information, constant change and interdependent problems whose

solutions require expert, diversified and complementary skills. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p.1)

Below are some of the common ideas that link NPDL with the QEP.

### **Higher Order Thinking Skills**

Seeing a causal link between specific teaching practices and higher-order thinking skills, technology plays a major role in integrating the two (Fullan, 2013, p. 43). Fullan (2013) interpreted the findings from the Innovative Teaching and Learning (ITL) research project sponsored by Microsoft's Partners in Learning. The finding indicated that innovative teaching practices consisted of student-centred pedagogy, extended learning beyond the classroom, and employed digital tools to accelerate specific learning goals. Furthermore, innovation is more likely to be seen in schools when educators collaborate on developing 21st century skills and who engage in professional development activities. Success was also supported by strong leadership. The findings indicate that when students experience innovative teaching practices, they are more likely to develop the skills necessary for success in the 21st century (Fullan, 2013, pp. 43-44).

### **Individualised Education**

NPDL discusses the important role of individualised education. They propose that this is different from differentiation, such as that which is promoted in the QEP. The QEP asserts that schools should strive to give all students an education that meets their needs, allows them to meet academic requirements, and to develop their full potential (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 11).

## Competency-Based Learning

There are clear limitations to pedagogical practices that are structured strictly on the transmission of knowledge and instrumental learning. To promote teaching that is different, the QEP is a program that is based on the development of a series of subject-specific and interdisciplinary competency development. The QEP asserts: “While the acquisition of knowledge may be well suited to a process that goes from the parts to the whole, the same is not true of the development of a competency, which depends on the characteristics of a situation” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p.13). A competency is defined as: “the ability to act effectively by mobilizing a range of resources” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p.12). The premise is that students develop competencies through varied, complex learning situations. These skills will continue to develop and students will be able to transfer these skills within new contexts (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 11).

The development and mastery of a competency is expressed through the students’ action. This means that to develop a competency, students need to be able to use critical judgement to select and employ the resources necessary for the specific context. To do so, they must have in their metaphorical toolboxes a diversified repertoire of resources, and they must have the capacity to explain and reflect on their choices within the context. Reflection is essential to the learning process. The program states: “The concept of competency thus implies the capacity to describe the process used to carry out tasks and solve problems. A competent person is able not only to draw on a great many automatic responses to carry out complex tasks, but also to

effectively regulate his or her actions through reflection” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 12).

### **Themes of Study - The Broad Areas of Learning**

The Broad Areas of Learning outline the interdisciplinary themes of instruction that are essential to ground learning and instruction (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: The Broad Areas of Learning*, p. 1). These themes concern issues in contemporary society. While they are not intended to be evaluated on their own, they provide the framework for instruction and can be considered in the evaluation of competencies. These themes provide the context, or the point of view from which an educator can plan their instructional design and competency development plans. They allow for comprehensive instructional design that understands that complex issues are not constrained to one subject (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 2: The Broad Areas of Learning*, pp. 1-4).

### **Authentic Learning**

For learning to be meaningful, it must be authentic. The QEP highlights the importance of framing learning in ways that allow students to establish connections with the world. Authentic learning encourages students to see the value of what they are learning and how it is useful beyond the classroom. “Openness to the world is especially important in Cycle Two of secondary school, because that is when students are making career choices and preparing to play an active role in civil society and the working world.” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 13). Authentic learning also provides opportunities for and encourages reflective practices. When students consider how their learning and skills are transferable, they are more likely to understand the world and take action based on their learning, even in situations where they have not yet had any formal learning

(Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 13). For learning to be truly authentic, it must not be presented in silos. As stated in the QEP:

The world is a complex, interdependent reality that cannot be grasped only through the study of the various subjects. Hence, education should be open to the relationships among phenomena and to the connections among different areas of knowledge. While starting from their specific subjects, teachers should encourage students to discover the connections that may be made with other subjects. In addition, they should sometimes focus on the integrated development of competencies through interdisciplinary activities in the classroom or the school. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 14)

### **Learning Design Element 2 - Learning Partnerships**

This design element aims to establish the importance of teachers and others in learning design. However, for the purpose of my research, I will focus on the teacher as a learning partner. Role of the Educator in Constructivism

The literature pertaining to Constructivism, Transformative learning, and NPDL all discuss the profoundly impactful role that educators have on student learning. While there are some differences in how the role of the educator is defined, it is evident that relationship building and acting as the activators and facilitators in students' individualised learning goals are essential to promote deep, meaningful, and potentially transformative learning experiences. It is of particular importance to delineate the role of the educator in various learning theories grounded in constructivism. Below I discuss the role of the educator in NPDL, Transformative Learning Theory and Constructivism.

## **Role of the Educator in NPDL**

Teachers as designers of learning experiences. This role involves translating curriculum standards with NPDL practices. The NPDL literature calls for teachers to become learning partners with students. For deep learning to occur there must be a development and focus on relationships as an “accelerator for learning” (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 61). The NPDL new student learning model has three elements—learning to learn (metacognition, feedback and agency), aspirations (expectations for themselves and what others have for them, which is a key determinant of success), and relationships (caring environment, connection through meaningful relationships) (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, pp. 62-63).

The NPDL literature asserts that when students become aware of their metacognition and learn to develop their ability to master their learning processes, the role of the teacher begins to shift from creator and facilitator of learning tasks to that of activator (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17). They argue that there are notable and profound differences between teachers as activator versus facilitator. To act as a “guide on the side” is too passive. Rather, activators foster relationships, set clear goals, utilise reciprocal teaching strategies, offer ongoing feedback, and employ a wide range of pedagogical practices (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 67). It also assumes that teachers become culture builders by cultivating a sense of care, connectedness and belonging, confidence and autonomy among their students (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 68). Furthermore, teachers work to collaborate with students and other educators to co-design learning based on individual needs and interests (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 69). The nature of the relationships outlined in NPDL has the power to redefine learning by helping students make authentic connections with educators

and/or experts to activate and inspire deep, relevant learning. This does not happen by chance. These relationships are intentional and need to be cultivated (Quinn et al, 2020, p. 58).

To do this, educators need to make the links between learning objectives and student interests, talents, and needs. One method is by increasing student choice therefore allowing students to become co-designers of their own learning (Quinn et al., 2020, p. 58). As a result, teachers must also become co-learners (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p. 14). Furthermore, it also requires that teachers come to know and work with the interests and needs of their students and design learning that pushes students forward (Fullan & Langworth, 2013, pp. 11-12).

Fullan and Langworthy (2013) remind us that Hattie’s (2011) research distinguishes between expert and experienced teachers. While they both have extensive knowledge, expert teachers “differ in how they organise and use this content knowledge” (as cited in Fullan & Langworthy, 2013, p. 12). Expert teachers use context knowledge of their students and their interests and needs well enough to design challenging learning experiences based on cognition. (Fullan & Langworth, 2013, p. 12; Fullan, 2013, p. 48).

**Figure 2.2**

*NPDL Educators as Facilitators vs. Activators*

<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Activator</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Smaller class sizes</li> <li>● Simulations and games</li> <li>● Enquiry-based learning</li> <li>● Guiding questions or problems</li> <li>● Personalized instruction</li> <li>● Problem-based learning</li> <li>● Web-based learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reciprocal teaching</li> <li>● Feedback</li> <li>● Teacher-student verbal interaction</li> <li>● Meta-cognition</li> <li>● Challenging goals</li> </ul>

(Fullan & Donnelly, 2013, p. 11)

John Hattie compared the two roles and found that there is greater positive impact on student learning when teachers assume the role of activator (Fullan, 2013, p. 48). Fullan and Langworthy (2014) argue that simply acting as facilitator is poor pedagogy. To further this, Robinson (2011) asserts that teachers who aim to act as change agents play four roles: recognizing, encouraging, facilitating, and stretching (as cited in Fullan, 2013, p. 25). When teachers change their role, they better enable their students to adopt new roles for themselves thereby activating deep learning (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p.13). We must also appreciate that teachers are an invaluable “source of human, social, and decisional capital” (Fullan & Langworth, 2013, p.13).

### **Role of the Educator in Transformative Learning**

Magro (2012) suggests that teachers with the goal of transformative learning need to redefine their role. She argues that educators define their role as advocates and should develop more authentic relationships with students (p. 319). Through authentic relationships, teachers can establish learning environments that allow students to feel safe and free to explore. If these relationships and feelings of mutual trust are not established, students will not be open to transformative learning. Therefore, it is the role of the educator to establish a culture of trust. Without this, students cannot be fully open to transformative learning experiences. According to Pavlidis (n.d.), instructors must be “emotionally, ideologically and politically attached to the social force that most needs transformation” (p. 32) a point further developed by Becker, de Wet, & van Vollenhoven (2015). As leaders, teachers are a great influential force for young minds.

Boyd (2009) outlines Transformational Leadership Theory which stipulates that the role that teachers play has a direct impact on the outcome of transformative learning. Teachers must focus on developing strong, trusting relationships with their students (Magro, 2012; Cranton,



2006, as cited in Boyd, 2009). The role of the educator cannot be underestimated when the intention is to create a transformative learning environment. Both education and relationships play a critical role on the impact and outcome of the experience.

### **Role of the Educator in the QEP**

The QEP reminds teachers that competencies cannot be taught. With regular opportunities to practise and develop, and through the continual guidance and support of their teachers students develop competency. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to ensure that learning is structured in this way to meet these expectations. Similarly, with NPDL and Transformative Learning Theory, the QEP places particular emphasis on the students' involvement in their learning. Not only should learning be active, but students should be active in their learning processes. This does not suggest that the role of the teacher is less valuable. Quite the opposite. The role of the teacher becomes quite complex and involved. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide for all the conditions and facilitate learning to ensure the three basic aspects of competency: mobilisation in context, availability of resources and reflection on the process (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 18).

As facilitators of learning, teachers guide and support students throughout the learning process. It requires that teachers develop strong relationships with their students so they can help to stimulate their interests, help them draw on prior knowledge, and negotiate available resources as they engage in new learning contexts. Students benefit from the teacher's knowledge and experience. Teachers guide students through reflective practices and help them to become aware of their prior knowledge, errors, and learning processes while encouraging students to develop

autonomy (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 18).

### **Learning Design Element 3: Leveraging Digital**

Today's students are digital natives. Technology is ubiquitous in their lives and it is imperative that teachers leverage these tools when planning instructional design. The NPDL literature explores in depth the transformative power that leveraging digital can have on deep learning. Leveraging digital is a part of the three other Learning Design Elements—pedagogical practices, learning partnerships, and learning environments. As an activator, the teacher has a role in ensuring that students are able to use digital software, apps, etc. to amplify learning, discover and create new knowledge. To do so teachers need to be skilled in selecting the most appropriate tools to help students do this (Quinn et al., 2020, p. 60).

Leveraging digital tools makes learning more relevant and authentic. The role of the teacher in one of partner in learning with there students. This relationship is accelerated by leveraging technology (Fullan & Langworth, 2013, p. 14). However, we must be weary and selective when considering the tools to employ. The NPDL profoundly stresses the importance of embracing technology but asks teachers to exercise caution when doing so. Technology has the power to accelerate learning, but as Fullan (2013) states: “so long as we get the causal sequence right: pedagogy to technology and then back and forth, back and forth” (p. 35). Integrating technology cannot be done for the sake of simply integrating technology. Often when this is the goal without the basis in pedagogy, educators can get caught up in the glitz and what is critical about the use of digital, which is supporting pedagogy. The availability and the use of technology is beneficial, but it does not replace good pedagogy. Therefore, educators must focus on pedagogy and learning theory before technology (Fullan, 2013, p. 37). Educators must be

reflective about the digital tools and apps that they incorporate into their lessons. There are many tools to choose from, but we must remember that using technology must not just be for the sake of it. Digital tools ought to enhance learning and provide opportunities for students to connect to others. These do not have to be complex or flashy because the purpose and the outcome of using the tools should be the focus (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, p. 81). It is not the tools, but the role that the tools serve in making learning deep and meaningful.

There are three considerations when selecting digital tools:

- The quality of the tool to ameliorate the learning experience. They must be participatory, engaging, co-creative and collaborative.
- The ease of which these tools can be adapted for the needs of the learner and for the learning experience. Simply, they must be intuitive, accessible, and adaptable.
- Must be adopted in a manner that is comprehensive and easily integrated into a variety of relevant learning contexts (Fullan & Donnelly, 2013, pp. 21-22).

Many digital tools use basic pedagogy or simply just allow for the same old methods to be done in digital platforms and do not meet the standards to qualify them as promoting deep learning. Fullan and Donnelly (2013) argue that they may provide some benefit, these are only incremental and lack the ability to change the pedagogy of the teachers who model them. Furthermore, simply using technology does not equate to more capable, or knowledgeable students (Fullan, 2013, p. 60). Fullan (2013) clearly states: “Technology is not a panacea. Not all technology is good for pedagogy. And great pedagogy can exist without technology” (Fullan, 2013, p. 78). Pedagogy must be the foundation and educators must always consider pedagogy and the needs of the students before and above tools. Fullan and Langworthy (2014) quote Will

Richardson (n.d.): “simply adding a layer of expensive tools on top of traditional curriculum does nothing to address the learning needs of modern learners” (p. 7).

### **Use of Digital in Constructivism**

Constructivists acknowledge the transformative power that exists with the use of digital technology. Not only can the use of software, apps, etc. extend the range of experiences for student learning and help them with problem-solving and critical thinking skills, digital tools cater to different learning styles and needs. It adds an opportunity for individualization and differentiation (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 18).

Further, Ertmer & Newby (2013) point out that digital technologies have profoundly changed the way we interact with knowledge. We no longer need to store knowledge in our minds, as the web-based clouds, etc. can easily do this for us. They have also changed the learning process and the way young people learn. “Know-how and know-what is being supplemented with know-where” (Siemens, 2004, as cited in Ertmer & Newby, 2013) and has re-wired the way students think and learn. Evidence suggests that the brains of digital natives present real differences in their thinking patterns. Resulting in students who prefer to learn by doing. Learners feel that doing is more important than knowing as this enables a deeper and more authentic understanding of the assigned task.

The use of digital technologies is important, but we must be mindful of pedagogy and their practical uses within our learning design. With thoughtful and intentional leveraging of digital tool , learning environments can extend beyond the classroom walls. They become limitless.

### **Learning Design Element 4: Learning Environments**

The fourth element of the NPDL learning design framework are learning environments.

The intentional consideration of learning environments is essential for deep learning to take place. There are two interrelated aspects of learning environments - physical and virtual spaces, and culture of learning (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 78).

Educators must consider that these environments include and extend beyond the set-up of classrooms. They include other physical spaces, virtual spaces as well as the culture of learning that is created within these spaces.

If we want our students to be curious, connected collaborators, then we need to provide multidimensional spaces that offer flexibility for large-and small- group collaboration; quiet places for reflection and cognition; active areas for investigation, inquiry, communication, and documentation; and rich resources that are transparently available. (Quinn et al, 2020, p. 59)

In the same way that educators must be mindful with how they use physical and virtual spaces to maximise learning, they must consider the culture that they promote within these spaces. The culture of learning should include the following characteristics: “Students asking the questions”; “questions valued above answers”; “varied models of learning”; “explicit connections to real-world application”; “collaboration”; and “assessment of learning that is embedded, transparent, and authentic” (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, p. 79).

### **Learning Environments in the QEP**

Similarly, the QEP explores learning environments as a part of instructional design. The program encourages educators to have flexible classroom organisations that employ a variety of resources, and those which provide support, enrichment, individualisation and differentiation. Furthermore, these environments must be rich in individual and collaborative work and learning

opportunities (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 20).

The program asserts that thoughtful, student-centred classroom environments are part of how we motivate and inspire students to learn. Another factor pertaining to learning environments to consider when designing learning and evaluation situations are the repertoire and availability of resources. Students draw on these while developing competencies. These resources are not limited to the physical environment and the materials available in the classroom (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 19).

### **Learning Environments in Constructivism**

When considering motivation, there are a number of factors that constructivists consider. Schunk (2012) outlines contextual factors, which include organisation and structure, and *TARGET* factors. These factors deal with the physical and virtual learning spaces as well as the culture of learning within these spaces (p. 255-256).

Organisation and structure of learning environments takes into account student groupings, evaluation and the dynamics between the teacher and their students. Educators should establish multidimensional classrooms whereby differentiation and the individual needs and interests of the students are met. These classrooms are flexible and promote autonomy and decrease student comparison (Schunk, 2012, p. 254-255).

*TARGET* deals with the other factors within classrooms that pertain to student motivation and learning. These are: *task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time*. *Task* pertains to how educators design engaging learning situations for students and the role that educators play in facilitating learning. *Authority* refers to the roles that students and educators

have within the classroom. TARGET driven classrooms should establish cultures where students develop a sense of responsibility and are encouraged to lead and participate in decision making. *Recognition* is the intentional use of incentives. *Grouping* pertains to the collaborative nature of classroom environments and how students learn to work with others. Groups of varying sizes should be employed. *Evaluation* should be individualised when possible and there must be a great degree of value placed on formative assessments. *Time* asks educators to be mindful of pacing and workloads and helping students learn time-management skills (Schunk, 2012, pp. 255-256).

Other key features of constructivist learning environments outlined by Schunk (2012) deal with how educators create meaningful opportunities and provide for authentic contexts in which students learn. Primarily, there ought to be a focus on large concepts and problem-based learning. Questions that challenge student thinking and/or deal with current and relevant issues should be prioritised. Second, there should be an avoidance of isolated learning. Rather learning should be holistic and integrated in nature. Third, student perspectives and points of view should be valued. When teachers aim to better understand why their students think a certain way or why they arrived at a certain conclusion they are better able to structure learning that targets their needs. Fourth, educators should endeavour to align learning with the suppositions of their students. It is here that educators would challenge thinking or present new ideas while remembering the zone of proximal development. Lastly, assessment should inform teaching (Schunk, 2012, pp. 261-262).

### **Critiques of NPDL**

While there are many pertinent ideas proposed in the NPDL literature that serve to reform educational practices, it must be noted that there are problematic issues that must be considered.

Firstly, while reforming education is the principal purpose of the vision behind NPDL and the authors have extensive backgrounds in education, NPDL is also a business. By selling copyright permissions, promoting its conferences and materials, and charging fees, NPDL limits the accessibility of the program which is in direct contradiction with the equity hypothesis that it proposes.

Another issue with the literature is that the premise of NPDL relies on the notion that most students are not engaged in their learning. However, there is a lack of data presented by them to support this claim. Rather, NPDL publications rely on the repeated use of the following statistic as the basis for their argument: student engagement drops from 74% to 34% between the fifth and twelfth grades (Fullan, Gardner & Drummy, 2019; Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018; Quinn et al., 2020) NPDL uses this as the foundation to argue that there is a crisis in education without providing much more quantitative or qualitative data to make this a sound argument.

A third issue is that very little of NPDL is actually “new”. While the literature does address this, NPDL markets itself as being a somewhat revolutionary framework for educational change. In reality, NPDL is just one of many educational frameworks that seek to promote constructivist approaches to education. The NPDL literature argues that the comprehensiveness, precision, and measurability of their framework is what makes these ideas *new* (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018, pp.18-19).

Lastly, while there is validity in the idea that those in closest proximity to change have the biggest impact, placing the largest responsibility on classroom teachers for educational reform can be problematic. It neglects to address the variety of barriers that limits a classroom teacher's ability to sustain real and meaningful change and arguably sets educators up for feelings



of inadequacy and failure. Despite these however, NPDL presents many valid perspectives on educational reform and invites educators and other stakeholders to engage in discourse and reconsider educational practices and frameworks.

This leads to the question whether or not transformative learning can indeed be contrived by an educator. According to Mezirow (1981), Transformative Learning is a central function for adult education, therefore one can assume that educators can, in some way, facilitate students' perspective transformations. However, the possibility for dramatic personal and social changes can only manifest when one develops awareness of the way social ideologies have formed or reinforced our dependency on reified powers (p. 6). Mezirow also asserts that there are two paths to perspective transformation. The first pathway is epochal whereby there is a sudden insight into the norms that have resulted in a distorted understanding of the self and world. The second pathway is incremental insofar that it is the result of a series of movements toward a change in understanding of the self and of the world. The latter is the most common. (p. 8) Perspective is made up of the multitude of experiences each of us have. For perspective transformation to occur a framing or reframing of these experiences is needed. These experiences tend not to be successive, rather they occur in more of a circular and recursive fashion (Apte, 2009. p. 172). Rogers (1961) asserts the value of experience in inspiring transformation: "Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience [...] the only thing which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning [...]" (as cited in Pavlidis, n.d., p. 9). Therefore, it is through experiences that transformation is set into motion. Teachers can lay the groundwork for these experiences.

Educators must also consider how one can accurately ascertain the occurrence of true, lasting perspective transformation. According to Mezirow (1981) “We are never in the position to know with absolute certainty that critical enlightenment has been effective — that it has liberated us from the ideological frozen constraints of the past, and initiated genuine self-reflection[...] any claim of enlightened understanding may itself be a deeper and subtler form of self-deception...” (p.8) But if it is not possible, how do we know if it is occurring and if educators are creating environments and situations conducive to transformation?

There is a wealth of data to suggest that an educator’s methodology and praxis can have an impact on transformational learning situations. The literature focuses on two broad areas of content. These are: the role of the educator as a facilitator whereby fostering authentic relationships are conducive to transformation, and a variety of preferred methods and strategies educators can employ to promote potential transformative learning experiences. It is how educators ignite and feed the fire that best contributes to potential transformative learning experiences.

Apte (2009) presents a framework for transformative learning from the facilitator’s perspective. This framework comprises four components: “confirming and interrupting current frames of reference; working with triggers for transformative learning; acknowledging a time of retreat and dormancy; and developing a new perspective” (p. 169). However, it should be noted that the selection of alternate-meaning perspectives usually reflects the values of the educator (Mezirow, 1981). Educators who wish to set the stage for transformational learning experiences must carefully consider their role as facilitators in this process and be mindful of their biases. Facilitators must also be cognizant of the power that exists within this role and must strive to find a delicate balance between encouraging critical thinking by exposing students to new or

disruptive themes and ideas and working to serve the needs of the students above their own (Boyd, 2009).

Pavlidis (n.d.) reminds us that educators can introduce students to knowledge beyond their everyday experiences. Furthermore, the interactions educators have with students serve to develop and cultivate students' cognitive abilities. During these times, *edge emotions* emerge (Malkki, 2010, as cited in Hoggan, Malkki, Finnegan, 2017). When meaning perspectives are intact, people are in comfort zones, however challenges to the comfort zone inspire edge emotions. When this occurs, it is natural to want to return as quickly as possible to the comfort zones. Educators should embrace *edge emotions* and utilise them as an impetus for perspective transformation. It is here when students are experiencing these disruptive emotions that educators have the opportunity to act.

As a means to foster critical thinking, researchers in education and cognitive psychology (Ennis, 1987; Paul, 1995; Beyer, 1997; as cited in Gabler & Schroeder, 2003) assert that educators must establish a thinker friendly environment where students feel safe to take risks, share ideas, and learn from mistakes; expose students to fact that there are multiple ways to think about complex situations and expose students to the ways of thinking by those skilled in the process; provide guidance and support during the process; and provide students with meaningful things to contemplate (pp. 23-24). Furthermore, educators must make classrooms thinker friendly. Teachers can do this by facilitating student-centred discussions, raise challenging questions, facilitating brainstorming and risk taking, allowing for student-led choices on learning and discovery, helping students make connections with other disciplines, supporting positive interactions and active listening, asking higher-order thinking questions, supporting that mistakes are opportunities to learn, and joining students in learning (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 25).

Educators must create a transformative learning environment that fosters students' ability to engage in the process of perspective transformation. They are to act as the facilitator and students embark on their own discovery and conduction of knowledge (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11). This is a conscious goal and not simply an “add-on” asserts Mezirow. Interventions such as critical reflection, confronting frames of reference, and discourse are essential to fostering a transformative learning experience in the classroom (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11).

### **21st Century Skills**

When establishing the connections between Constructivism, transformative learning and NPDL within the context of the QEP, a discussion and synthesis of the common themes pertaining to essential skills for the 21st Century is necessary. NPDL argues that their 21st Century skills differ to other similar lists in terms of their interdisciplinary nature, their precision as they are can be put into action, and measurability using their progressions (Quinn et al, 2020, p. 28). I propose using these progressions to measure deep learning outcomes.

This level of the framework proposed in Chapter 3 of this thesis is a synthesis of the holistic 21st Century skills outlined in NPDL’s Six Global Competencies (6 Cs), the QEP’s nine Cross-Curricular Competencies (CCC) and common themes of Transformative Learning Theory. To assess these skills educators can use the *NPDL* Six Global Competencies progressions found in the NPDL literature. These allow for deep learning tasks to have clear success indicators as a means to measure development. Furthermore, they bring transparency and clarity to learning objectives (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p. 28).

**Figure 2.3**

*Synthesis of 21st Century Skills presented in NPDL, Transformative Learning Theory and the QEP*

1 Collaboration and cooperation	2 Critical thinking and judgement	3 Creativity	4 Citizenship and worldview	5 Communication	6 Identity, Character and well-being
NPDL: Collaboration  TL: Balance of attaining collective and personal goals  QEP: CCC5 Adopts effective work methods  CCC7 Cooperates with others	NPDL: Critical Thinking  TLT: Critical reflection  QEP: CCC1 Uses information  CCC2 Solves problems  CCC3 Exercises critical judgement  CCC6 Uses information and communication technologies.	NPDL: Creativity  TLT: Creativity  QEP: CCC4 Uses creativity	NPDL: Citizenship  TLT: Reverence for life  Democratic discourse	NPDL: Communication  TLT: Democratic discourse  QEP: CCC9 Communicates appropriately	NPDL: Character  TLT: Critical reflection  Self-knowledge  Balance of attaining collective and personal goals  QEP: CCC5 Adopts effective work methods  CCC8 Achieves his/her potential

**21st Century Skill One: Collaboration and Cooperation**

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory emphasises the social nature of learning and in part explores the interpersonal factors as the basis of learning and meaning-making (Shunk, 2012, pp. 240-242). While constructivism asserts that knowledge is constructed within us, social constructivism purports that knowledge is constructed through the social interactions and discourse that we have with others. The 21st century skill *Collaboration and cooperation* in part fits into this theory. Helping students develop these interpersonal skills, we are providing them

with the tools for their development.

Collaborative learning is defined as: “a pedagogical approach to teaching that moves students from a passive learner to an active participant in the educational process” (Stover & Holland, 2017, p.1). Lecture style, sage on the stage, practices are still not uncommon methods utilised in contemporary classrooms. While there are benefits to lectures at times, it can inhibit opportunities for dialogue and can provide few students with limited opportunities to carry out and apply skills, make connections with the content and work collaboratively with their peers.

There are a number of strategies and methods that can be employed in the development of students’ collaborative and cooperative skills. These include: peer-assisted learning, such as peer tutoring and cooperative learning, discussion and debates whereby students learn not only through the things that the other students express, but also develop their skills to communicate and cooperate with others (Schunk, 2012, pp. 270-272).

Other methods that can be used include small group learning (Gash, 2014, p. 307). Flipping the classroom is a way to provide more opportunity for student-centred, collaborative and cooperative learning opportunities. In the flipped classroom model, learning is inverted and reading, or similar tasks are done at home. This allows for class time to be used for discussion, collaborative learning, applications and work (Gomez-Lanier, 2018, p. 1). Studies suggest that learning occurs in socially based, collaborative interactions. This is because students bring their knowledge and experience to the table. Through collaboration and discussion, students are able to better understand their own perspectives as well as the perspectives of others. Stover and Holland (2018) found that grades improved with a flipped classroom design, but only if students participate and buy-in to the process. Student buy-in can be difficult for two reasons: 1) The onus is on the student to do the work outside of class. If students do not or cannot come to class

prepared, the benefits of this design are diminished (Gomez-Lanier, 2018). And 2) students may not value the learning experience as a valid one. They may perceive it as less valuable to the learning that they would receive from the teacher through more traditional methods (Stover & Holland, 2018). However, the teacher has the power to act proactively to prevent, and reactively to resolve the problems which arise with the resistance to the flipped classroom experience. Ultimately, Stover & Holland (2018) and Gomez-Lanier (2018) argue that teachers must facilitate the process and be proactive in their approach to flipped classroom learning.

Furthermore with the flipped classroom method, students are provided with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and self-directed learning strategies as it allows for students to better analyse and evaluate the information and content promotes connection and meaning making between content and application and allows for students to apply the content to real, meaningful work and skills (Gomez-Lanier, 2018).

Digital technologies and going public have expanded learning communities as we can learn and collaborate with people all over the world and help students learn through each other through online publishing (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 22).

For deep collaborative learning to take place, the NPD literature calls for students to work both interdependently and synergistically, and for the development and support of the skills that relate to the fostering of effective group dynamics (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17).

### **21st Century Skill Two: Critical Thinking and Judgement**

Ennis (1997, as cited in Gabler & Schroeder, 2003), defines critical thinking as the “reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or what to do placing a clear emphasis on informed decision making” (p. 20). The most important attribute of critical thinking,

which driven by curiosity, is the desire to stay well informed. Students display critical thinking by demonstrating an open-mind and asking insightful questions (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 20).

Critical thinkers are driven to gather a variety of sources, evaluate the information and arguments presented, and assess the credibility of these sources to construct meaningful knowledge. Furthermore, critical thinking is displayed when students work on higher order thinking skills whereby through the inquiry process, they use information to make connections, and express alternative perspectives in creative ways and practise metacognitive skills such as reflection (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 20; Quinn et al, 2020, p. 29).

Educators must be mindful that each person has their own frames of references, ways of thinking, and biases. Therefore, the development of critical thinking skills should draw on creativity, intuition and innovation (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 21). There are a variety of methods that promote critical thinking by engaging students in complex reasoning and problem solving. These include but are not limited to experimenting, discussion, writing of a speech or position paper, creative writing or arts, drama, debates, and taking action in the real world (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003, p. 21; Quinn et al, 2020, p. 29).

### **21st Century Skill Three: Creativity**

At the top of the higher order thinking skills domain is creativity from the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Creativity does not just involve the arts; it is an interdisciplinary skill. Creativity is expressed when students ask the right inquiry questions, use their knowledge to act entrepreneurially, pursue novel ideas and solutions, and take initiative to turn leadership into



actions. Creativity does not just apply to the arts but includes interdisciplinary creative thought with a focus on inquiry, entrepreneurialism, new ideas and solutions, and action (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Quinn et al, 2020, p. 29).

### **21st Century Skill Four: Citizenship and Worldview**

Teachers have the profound duty to help students make sense of the world and their place in it. Exploring crises, whether it be personal, economic, political, or so on, can better position students for the dynamic and evolving world. As educators, we must consider how we can bring these issues into our classrooms as a means for growth and enlightenment. Moreover, we have the power and responsibility to facilitate meaningful learning environments for students as they journey their way to their own destinations. Deep learning tasks do not always have to address global issues. What is critical is that through the curriculum, students develop and are engaged in authentic learning tasks that address real-life issues (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p. 26). It is through these experiences that students will develop their citizenship and worldview.

Both NPDL and the QEP call for students to develop a global perspective and empathy through diverse values and perspectives. Students are encouraged to explore issues pertaining to ethics, environment and sustainability and making the world a better place. This exploration should inspire students to contemplate how to solve complex problems to benefit the world. Students integrate knowledge and know-how when they act in these areas (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 8; Quinn et al, 2020, p. 29).

Education that promotes citizenship and worldview inspires students to help humanity, find their voice and agency to affect change (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, p. 47; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p. 15) for which there are many opportunities in the design of the QEP's

Secondary Cycle Two for students to further what they have developed in Cycle One.

Furthermore, in Cycle Two, students will draw on critical thinking skills to establish links with their concept of citizenship and worldview. Through the study of contemporary personal, local and global issues and natural phenomena, students will challenge their notions and compare them with those of experts. This exercise will develop their intellectual curiosity and critical thinking (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, pp. 8-9). Like NPDL, the QEP calls for students to work on their open-mindedness and for students to develop their citizenship and worldview by exercising critical judgement through the exploration of diverse perspectives (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 7).

### **21st Century Skill Five: Communication**

Communication skills are an essential aspect of student learning and development. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is not just about the development of language skills but also the development of interpersonal skills, as well as helping students engage with others to deepen the learning of themselves as well as others. Empowering our students to find their voice and helping them learn when and how to communicate allows students to appreciate the power and agency that is afforded through communication. Through communication, students learn about themselves and their world. They develop relationships and understanding of themselves and others and come to appreciate that communication can serve many purposes and can have impact on the listener and communicator. Students should develop a familiarity with different methods and means to communicate. Furthermore, the development of this competency must demonstrate an understanding of who they are communicating to (their audience) and their needs, expectations, and how the message they wish to deliver will be best

conveyed to them. There are also interpersonal skills at play here. Students must also reflect on their choices and the outcomes as part of their learning (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 3: Cross-Curricular Competencies*, p. 22; Quinn et al., 2020, p. 29).

Transformative Learning highlights the value of discussion and discourse is an important element in facilitating a transformative learning experience. According to Christie and associates (2015):

rational discourse demands complete and accurate information, freedom from coercion or distorting self-deception, an ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively, an openness to other points of view, an equal opportunity to participate, critical reflection of assumptions and a willingness to accept informed, objective and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity (p.12).

However, this can only be accomplished if the environment is favourable. Educators must be aware of the physical and intangible environment in educational settings. It is essential that students feel safe — safe to express their opinions, and safe to talk freely, free from ridicule, in a place of understanding (Jarvis, 2006).

### **21st Century Skill Six: Identity, Character and Well-Being**

Character and well-being refer to the skills that contribute to the overall development of the socialisation and identity of the student. While character and well-being in themselves are not skills, education should provide students with the opportunities to develop the skills that contribute to students' individual identities and sense of well-being. Educational activities should be structured to allow students to develop a sense of self. Students should come to recognize their personal characteristics, interests, strengths, and aspects of themselves that need

development. Through learning situations, students should be given the opportunity to explore and consider who they are, who they want to become, and develop empathy and compassion (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 3: Cross-Curricular Competencies*, p. 14, Quinn et al., 2020, p. 29). Identity is constructed in a similar way when students begin to consider who they are through their various communities and belief systems. They learn to adjust to the world in a way that is unique to them (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 8).

Developing a sense of character also takes into consideration students' attitudes toward work and learning, their perseverance and resilience. Students should be inspired to be proactive in learning to learn (Fullan, Quinn & McEachen, 2018, p. 17; Quinn et al., 2020, p. 29) which requires that students are able to adopt analytic approaches to their work strategies (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 3: Cross-Curricular Competencies*, p. 14).

NDPL takes the discussion of well-being beyond to include how the development of each of the Six Global Competencies concerns the holistic development of the well-being of the student. These competencies synergistically serve to help students develop a sense of well-being in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, p. 21).

### **Summary of the Chapter**

The preceding section has provided a review of the literature pertaining to the common themes of NPDL, Constructivism, and Transformative Learning Theory. This section outlined the framework of NPDL. Connections were established with the NPDL and core principles of the Québec Education Program, Constructivism and Transformative Learning to establish the compatibility of these approaches to pedagogy and learning.

SELA2 provides for an excellent opportunity to facilitate deep, meaningful and potentially transformative learning for students. The next chapter will explore how the 21st century skills are compatible with the subject-specific competencies outlined in the program. My work will also explore practical strategies for SELA2 educators.

## **Chapter 3: Curriculum (SELA2) and Practical Applications: Bridging Curriculum Standards with NPDL and Transformative Learning Theory**

### **Introduction**

It is the teachers' responsibility to grasp the essence of each subject area and its complementarity with the others. By having a better understanding of the learning expected of students, teachers will be better equipped to ensure continuity among their respective actions and to occasionally provide integrative learning situations drawing on more than one subject. Because of their integrative nature, the subject areas bring out the fact that the aim of instruction is not limited to the accumulation of abstract, isolated knowledge. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter Subject Areas*, p.1)

The QEP highlights some key strategies that can be used to provide students with meaningful learning and evaluation situations within each subject area. These serve as a guide for educators when designing instruction that both meets the requirements of the curriculum as well as employ constructivist methods. While these provide a framework for SELA2, teachers would benefit from some suggested strategies for the implementation. Again, acknowledging that the program does respect and promote the professional independence of the teacher and encourages student-centred approaches, practical applications can guide teachers through instructional design. This is not to suggest that teachers require a repertoire of ready-made lessons, but rather some examples of strategies and applications that can be drawn on and individualised.

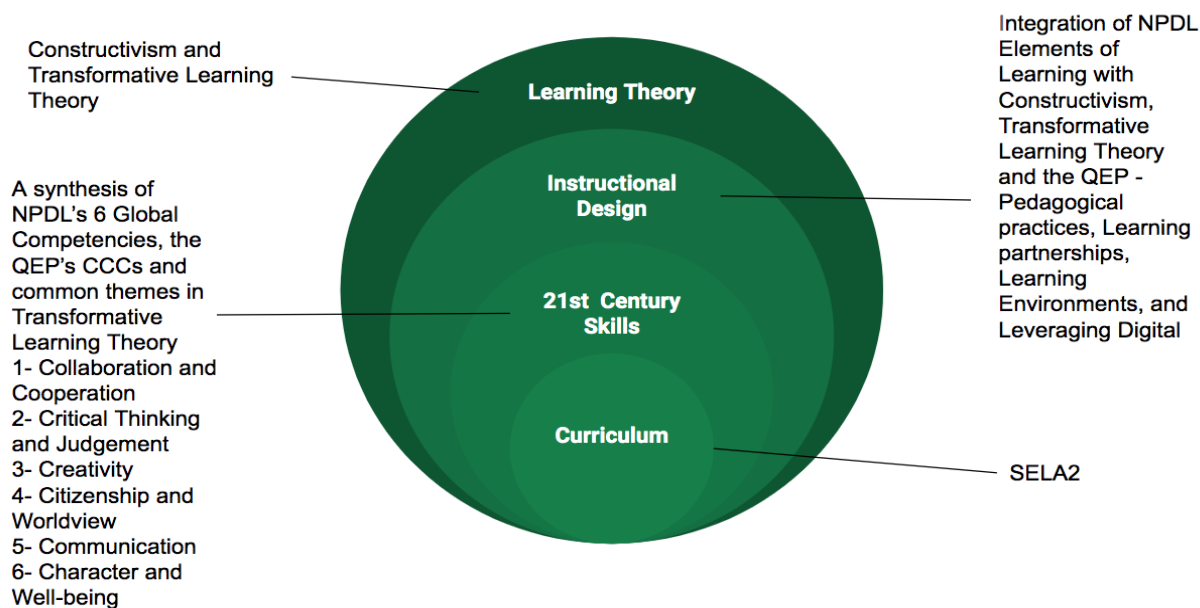
In this chapter I will outline an instructional design framework for deep, meaningful, and transformative learning in SELA2. This will include an overview of the SELA2 competencies and some suggested applications that teachers can use that bridge 21st century skills and promote deep, transformational learning experiences. This chapter will also outline how educators can evaluate and assess the development of these skills and transformative learning.

### **Instructional Design Framework for Deep, Meaningful and Transformative Learning in SELA2**

When designing instruction, the QEP suggests that teachers should begin by working with students' interest and should strive to structure lessons that are useful and relevant to serve to inspire curiosity and interest in new ideas. It is also important that these lessons create moments of cognitive dissonance while still working within students' Zone of Proximal Development. It is essential that students draw upon prior knowledge and understanding to make connections when faced with new ideas or challenges. Furthermore, teachers should prioritise discussion, research and collaboration (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p. 20).

**Figure 3.1**

*Instructional Design Framework for Deep, Meaningful and Transformative Learning in SELA2*



The concept of backward design, as outlined in the *NPDL* literature, stipulates that the educator must first begin by establishing clear learning objectives. This is the most focused element of the framework, thus its position in the centre. These are the three subject-specific competencies and the learning objectives and criteria outlined in the SELA2 program and the *Progression of Learning at the Secondary Level: English Language Arts*. As proposed, the educator would begin in the centre of the framework and then move outward to the other three sections as they consider the other elements of the framework—21st Century Skills, Instructional Design, and Learning Theory. However, for the purpose of my research, I have outlined and discussed the three outer layers in the previous chapter. The rationale for this is primarily to provide educators with the foundation of the applicable learning theories, the instructional design method and the



21st Century skills. Therefore, introducing the framework with an outline of Constructivist and Transformative Learning theories within the context of the SELA2 curriculum is practically speaking the most logical place to begin. Furthermore, anecdotally speaking, many educators begin and end instructional design plans with subject-specific curriculum standards. This results in educational practices that lack foundation in learning theory, authenticity, relevance, and skill-base. It is not without reason that educators may move inward and outward throughout their continued use of the framework.

### **Outline of SELA2**

The SELA2 program is an integrated language arts program with the primary focus on literacy. SELA2 allows for students to explore the vital role that language and literacy play in communication, life-long learning and participation in society. Furthermore, the SELA2 program connects to other aspects and subjects within the QEP. The Broad Areas of Learning provide thematic contexts and the Cross-Curricular Competencies establish the strategies and processes that are needed for students to learn. Educators refer to the development of these competencies when designing learning opportunities within the context of the SELA2 subject-specific competencies (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, pp. 1-5). The 21st Century skills outlined in chapter two would be used within the context of the framework of instructional design for deep, meaningful transformative learning.

Students develop their ability to read and produce a variety of written, spoken and media texts through the three subject-specific competencies: *Competency 1 - Uses language/talk to communicate and learn; Competency 2 - reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts; and Competency 3 - produces texts for personal and social purposes*. These competencies are interdependent and complementary. The flexibility of the program allows for teachers to work

with their students to make suitable instructional decisions based on individualised contexts. Students demonstrate development and proficiency in the competencies. The integrative nature of these competencies allows for students to read and produce a variety of different genres as a means to develop their critical literacy, collaboration, and ability to work with information. Students work on essential aspects of each competency (*Key features of the competency*). These features define the main components involved in the development of the competency. Furthermore, students read and produce texts from the Repertoire of Required Genres: Planning; Reflective; Narrative; Explanatory; Reports; and Expository (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, pp. 5-9). The integration of these elements covers the essential features of the SELA2 program.

**Figure 3.2**

*Key Features of the SELA2 Competencies*

<p><i>Competency 1 - Uses language/talk to communicate and learn</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishes a repertoire of resources for communicating and learning in specific contexts</li> <li>- Participates in the social practices of the classroom and community in specific contexts</li> <li>- Integrates with peers and teachers in specific contexts (p. 15)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Competency 2 - reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrates reading profile, stance and strategies to make sense of a text in a specific context</li> <li>- Talks about own responses to a text within a classroom community</li> <li>- Interprets the relationship(s) between reader, text and context in light of own response(s) (p. 35)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Competency 3 - produces texts for personal and social purposes</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extends repertoire of resources for producing texts</li> <li>- Constructs a relationship between writer/producer, text and context</li> <li>- Adapts a process to produce texts in specific contexts (p. 50)</li> </ul>

For more specific details pertaining to curriculum expectations, teachers should refer to the *Progression of Learning at the Secondary Level: English Language Arts*. This document outlines the expected development of essential knowledge and skills for SELA2. While this supplemental document does provide more clarity regarding what specific skills and knowledge students need to develop and in which grade-level competency for each should be achieved, it does not offer any practical applications for educators. In the proceeding section, I outline some applications that teachers can use when designing instruction based on the framework outlined earlier in this chapter.

### **Practical Applications**

There are countless ways that SELA2 educators can design instruction with the goal of deep, meaningful, transformative learning. As outlined in Chapter 2, deep learning occurs when educators use constructivist methods in conjunction with the NPDL learning design elements development of the 21st century skills to apply a layer of depth to curriculum standards.

Transformative learning should be considered a little differently in the context of secondary instruction. Although there are no particular teaching methods that can guarantee transformative learning, and according to Cranton (2002) to assume so would be naive, a variety of methods can be employed to lay the foundation for transformation. Cranton (2002) has detailed some strategies which can be used to facilitate each of her seven facets of perspective transformation. Added to each facet are methods and strategies detailed by other contributors to the discussion on effective transformational strategies. This detailed list can serve as a foundation for the preferred strategies to employ to foster transformation.

The first step in Cranton's process of transformation is the *activating event*, the moment that can initiate transformation. Mezirow (1981) suggests that educators can draw on the technique of "breaching" to challenge students' meaning structures and frames of reference to inspire perspective transformation. This can be done by exposing students to hypothetical dilemmas and contradicting rules and assumptions. Educators can use provocative films, documentaries, novels, and other texts which portray unfamiliar or unusual perspectives to expose students to alternative views of the world which can serve as the catalyst for transformative learning (Cranton, 2002; Jarvis, 2006). Tools for inspiring activating events can go beyond the confines of the classroom walls. Another powerful tool for this end lies in the use of technology. Modern technology allows students to take virtual trips to other countries, interact with others, and see the world and its people in ways they may never have had the opportunity to do otherwise (Boyd, 2009). Furthermore, artistic activities or experiences with nature can also provide moments that enable students to perceive the world with "new eyes" (Amend & Benne, 2012, p. 19). Lee and Nicolaidis (2012) discuss the positive impact that technology can have as a tool to promote transformative learning. With the use of online discussion groups, students can develop authentic relationships with each other and with the educator.

The second step is to encourage students to engage in *articulating assumptions*, whereby students have the opportunity to voice and unearth their presuppositions. The educator should encourage Socratic dialogue among discussion groups who are facing a common dilemma (Mezirow, 1981, p. 19), or encourage students to engage in creating autobiographies as a means of self-exploration and understanding (Cranton, 2002).

Following the articulation of one's preconceived notions is the time for *critical self-reflection*. This occurs when students are given the opportunity to question their assumptions

and often occur through discussion or journaling (Cranton, 2002). When teachers encourage students to work through the process of critical reflection through journaling and writing, discussions, and projects they allow students to reflect and make connections between the content they have been exposed to and their lives (Boyd, 2009).

Furthermore, students must have an *openness to alternatives*. This can be a difficult aspect of the process for many students. To foster this, educators can ask students to write letters from a different perspective, or viewpoints (Cranton, 2002). Engaging in sympathetic, and empathetic activities allows for the learner to work on developing an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of others (Mezirow, 1981, p. 19).

Once students have developed an openness to alternative ways of understanding the world, they can begin to engage in *discourse*. Beginning with discussion and then moving on to discourse, students have the opportunity to address the same issue in two ways. One method to do this is through dialogue journaling (Cranton, 2002).

The final two facets of Cranton's facets of transformation are a *revision of assumptions and perspectives* and *acting on revisions*. SELA2 educators can provide opportunities for students to act upon these revisions. Student-centred and driven experiential learning opportunities provide for authentic ways for students to explore and act on their revision of their assumptions (Cranton, 2002).

A final consideration for educators pertains to the validation of transformative education and learning. Cranton, Stuckey, & Taylor (2012) proposes *The Learning Activities Survey* as a useful method to validate and assess the processes and outcomes within the classroom. They also argue that the best method to ascertain transformation is through student self-reporting techniques. Understanding that transformation is an individual process which manifests in

personal ways, educators should rely on asking students questions to properly assess whether and to what degree transformation has in fact taken place, as it may not always be outwardly apparent.

The common themes in transformative learning - critical reflection, creativity, self-knowledge, a reverence for life, democratic discourse, and the balance of attaining collective and personal goals as outlined by Magro (2012, p. 315) can easily be applied to SELA2. Many texts and thematic units of study in SELA2 intrinsically incorporate these aforementioned themes through dialogue, reflection, and creative assignments. Reflection and response work are effective methods to inspire students to engage in their thoughts, beliefs, and understanding for deeper and more meaningful learning experiences.

### **Literature and Other Texts to Initiate an Activating Event**

It is imperative that educators work toward creating relevant curriculums aimed at helping students address pertinent, relevant, and authentic issues. Through the study of literature and other print and media texts, students are exposed to multiple perspectives and voices. Magro (2012) discusses what she calls *Mirror and Windows* as a way of developing a curriculum which can inspire transformative learning. Smolen and MacDonald (2008) summarised the value and power of a variety of texts: “Quality global literature can open readers’ eyes and lead them to question why poverty, war, oppression and injustice still exist in the world today.” (p. 5) Texts selected with the aim of educating, inspiring, and evoking a deeper understanding of self and the world, and to rousing empathy can lay the foundation for transformational experiences. These texts can expose students to perspectives and realities that differ from their own and have potential to initiate disorienting dilemmas or activating events.

When making text selections, educators act as curriculum creators which provides them with reasonable power to make choices that they believe are most beneficial to students. Carefully selected literature can engage students in critical thought, exploration of their feelings and help them to respond personally and critically to these texts. By providing students with a variety of texts from diverse perspectives students have the opportunity to make their own meaning, rather than receiving it. Through a critical reflection process, students can come to terms with the factors, experiences, values and so on that have determined how they have constructed meaning. They come to realize that there are multiple meanings to a text, and the meaning belongs to them, the meaning maker (Jarvis, 2006).

To a large degree, SELA2 students seek to understand who they are and how they fit into the world around them. They are curious about many things, yet for many their youth equates to inexperience. NPDL can serve to underscore the curriculum design in this regard. Through the study of novels and texts, students will be provided with the opportunity to connect to characters and people from different parts of the world and different times in history to make learning more authentic and grounded in real-world contexts.

The exploration of a variety of texts is clearly outlined in the SELA2 program, particularly in the development of Competency Two. Providing plenty of opportunities to read, students develop the skills to become more critical readers and thinkers. They also allow for the opportunity for students to work on the meaning-making process and engage in different and aesthetic reading, depending on the context. Furthermore, the development of critical literacy is reinforced through these opportunities (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, pp. 31-34).

When we consider the power of texts to open minds and inspire discussion, we are opening our classrooms to innumerable resources with immeasurable beneficial impact. These texts can promote rich dialogues. Furthermore, teachers must contend with growing student disengagement and the need to demonstrate relevance and practical applications of the content. In the SELA2 classroom, there are many opportunities to re-inspire engagement as well as negotiate distractions. Teachers need to work with and not against students' appeal of immediate visual and digital content which pervades their technologically saturated lives. It is for this reason that SELA2 teachers must explore alternate means to create and inspire engagement in literature and other texts (Riain, Dawson & McCarthy, 2017).

The exploration of a variety of texts opens the doors to a number of other potential practices and methods for the SELA2 teacher. Some of these include the multiple ways that texts can inspire and provide opportunities for students to engage in talk to learn, such as literature circles. Another effective strategy is literature response activities. Learning is deepened and becomes more meaningful when students are given opportunities to respond to texts in a way that is relevant and authentic to their experiences as a reader. Furthermore, allowing for creative literature/reader responses can be highly effective in helping students sort out the text, the messages, and how and what they think. Where texts can serve as the activating event, response activities can serve as a way for students to negotiate how they articulate their assumptions and/or exercise critical self-reflections. Students can write traditional responses to literature, or they can engage in more creative practices, such as writing obituaries for a character, developing a script or a play, or writing a review (Smolen and MacDonald, 2008).



## **Group Work, Discussion, and Discourse (talk): Opportunities for Students to Learn with and From Each Other**

There are many practical ways to engage students with opportunities to talk. It is also important to note that engaging students in talk goes far beyond the notion of students standing in front of the classroom to deliver a presentation. Engaging students in talk is a process whereby they develop their skills to work in groups of varying sizes and for various purposes and support the development of effective communication as outlined in the SELA2 program. These practices are supported by the principles of NPD L in that they are collaborative in nature and promote student-centred practices. They also provide the opportunity for students to engage in several of the steps of Cranton's process of transformation. They allow for opportunities for students to articulate their assumptions when sharing ideas with others. When others share with them, students engage in the practice of being open to alternatives. Furthermore, they provide opportunities for discourse. There are a number of practices that teachers can draw on. These include: role-play, flipping and triple flipping the classroom, and collaborative autoethnography.

### **Role-Play**

Role-play is a collaborative and creative expression of learning and "occurs when someone acts out a role that is different from his/her normal role in life in order to create a piece of drama" (O'Sullivan, 2011, as cited in Riain, Dawson & McCarthy, 2018, p.1). In this, teachers are to act as facilitators, and students work in small or large groups which "fosters freedom and creates a 'positive affective climate'" (p. 2). This allows for low risk learning to take shape. By providing students with opportunities to role-play in SELA2, they are given the opportunities to demonstrate learning in the physical form (physicalization), as well as through imagination.

Additionally, it also aids in students' understanding of storytelling. Role-play also draws on creativity, the highest level of the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy (pp. 1-2).

Riain, Dawson & McCarthy (2018) provide a summary of a research study conducted with 18 students and role-play in literature lectures. The results of this study were positive. It began by providing students with pre-texts to read prior to role-play activities and found that having students reenact a stripped-down version of the text helped the actors as well as the viewers develop a deeper understanding of the elements of the story. Also, role-play allowed students to sort out themes, apply meaning and make connections, and identify important elements of the plot. Further, students also responded positively to the activities. They reported that role-play not only helped in their learning but kept them engaged.

For SELA2 teachers, this is a strategy which can ignite reading as a process of active learning. Again, the role of the teacher is to act as a facilitator or activator. Teachers must also be aware that this form of participatory learning takes time and requires several steps to ensure that it can achieve the full benefit of its practice. It was concluded that pre-reading, group work, role play, a learning assessment questionnaire and essay writing are all critical components to the task. Additionally, it is important that this be done more than once for students to receive the full benefits of role-play activities (Riain, Dawson & McCarthy, 2018).

### **Flipping the Classroom**

The flipped classroom, as outlined in the previous chapter, is a method that SELA2 educators can employ to allow for more class time for students to work on various projects and tasks and for students to engage with their peers in literature circles. Another interesting strategy is the use of technology and mobile apps to support collaborative learning and as an alternate means to flip the classroom. Hojeij & Hurley (2017) investigated how leveraging technology for

the purpose of peer and self-editing can enhance student engagement, improve writing, and minimize the passive feedback of traditional corrective methods. The term *the triple flip* is a means whereby digital applications are employed to create new structures during the writing process thereby allowing for learning to take place outside the classroom and altering the traditional teacher-led approaches. For SELA2, this study is particularly interesting because it activates student engagement and responsibility in the writing process and employs strategies that contribute to collaborative learning and sharing processes. This study found that skills and quality of writing did improve with the use of these applications. Using editing devices helped students take more notice of their errors than with traditional corrective feedback. Also, the investment in their work increased when students were faced with the prospect of publishing their work on sharing platforms. However, students reported that they did not necessarily find this process beneficial. This study found that students still required careful guidance in the writing and review process. This implies that the imperative is on the teacher to facilitate the use of such methods. In this context, teachers facilitate the applications of these mediums and provide guided step-by-step training for their optimal use.

### **Research-Creation and Creative Projects**

By employing participatory, experiential, and creative practices that inspire active learning, SELA2 teachers can inspire deep, meaningful, and transformative learning experiences. When providing students with opportunities to engage in the development of 21st century skills and display, or reflect upon their transformative experiences, there are a number of effective methods which can be employed. These methods allow for students to engage in Cranton's final two stages of the process of transformation: *revision of assumptions and perspectives* and *acting on revisions*. The multimodality of creativity, and reflection are two dominant methods to assist

in the implementation of the transformative learning environment. DeFauw and Taylor (2015) outline how the integration of art and culture in English Language Arts can foster student's understanding and development of critical thinking skills, provide diversity instruction, as well as engage and inspire young minds.

The QEP outlines the use of creativity as one of its intellectual competencies as well as outlines strategies for creative learning in the SELA2 curriculum, particularly in the development of the key features of Competency 3. The creative process has profound potential to help guide students through their learning and experiences. Creativity is an important element of expression and by allowing our students to create, we are granting them the opportunity to express themselves, their learning, and transformation. Whether it be through research creation projects as outlined in Chapman and Sawchuk (2012), or Anae's (2014) approach to creative writing and art, Truong-White and McLean's (2015) view on the transformative power of digital storytelling, it is evident that the act of creation is a practice in exploration and learning. Students explore their identity, learn to think critically, and demonstrate their new understanding and knowledge of self and the world through the production process.

### **Research Creation Projects**

Again, acknowledging that a student's ability to demonstrate their thinking and learning through creative methods is the highest of the higher order thinking skills, research-creation projects provide wonderful opportunities for students to direct their own learning in meaningful and authentic ways. Furthermore, the QEP states that one of its aims is the "construction of student's world-view", moreover it outlines "uses information", "uses creativity" and "exercises critical judgement" as three of its four intellectual competencies. All of which can be achieved with assigning creative based projects. When developing Competency 3 skills, the QEP states that students "use the insights gained from being a producer and an audience member to better

understand themselves and the experiences of others” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Chapter 5: Secondary English Language Arts*, p. 49).

Chapman and Sawchuck (2012) define research creation projects as those which integrate the research projects with creativity and art. The theoretical, technical, and creative aspects of research projects are jointly explored (pp. 5-6). There are four different approaches to research-creation projects: “research-for-creation”, “research-from-creation”, “creative presentations of research” and “creation as research” (p. 7).

Research-for-creation involves an initial gathering of data, information, materials etc. for the purpose of designing or creating. The goal does not have to be the actual creative piece. Rather the goal of the project can be to design a prototype or plan (pp. 15-16). Research-from-creation results from the exploration of art to generate research data for the purpose of gathering information for another project (p.16). Creative presentations of research as the name suggests is allowing for research to be presented in non-traditional, creative ways (p.18). Lastly, creation-as-research, which Chapman and Sawchuck claim may be the most complex and controversial of the four involves projects whereby the creation reveals the research (p. 19).

### **Creative Writing and Storytelling**

There are countless methods that SELA2 educators can use to allow students to produce creative pieces that promote deep learning and can evoke transformative learning experiences while addressing the key features of competency development. Digital storytelling explored by Troung-White and McLean (2015) is a valuable method that draws on the use of digital technologies to provide the platform for students to explore and analyse controversial global issues, engage in self-reflection, and develop narrative skills (p.1). Through this process, SELA2 students would explore topics that could serve as activating events. As they navigate these issues,

students would be assigned digital storytelling assignments. These assignments give students the platforms to express lived experiences through the multimodal affordances of digital presentations. These presentations are highly creative as they can be layered in ways that cannot be done with traditional story-telling methods (p. 7). To activate a learning experience that is deeper and transformative, students would share their work and engage in moments of dialogue and discourse. Teacher could also encourage students to engage in reflective journaling throughout the process to allow students opportunities to engage in critical self-reflection, and openness to alternatives and a revision of assumptions.

### **Ethnography and Autoethnography**

Arias (2008) argues that educators should model ethnographic practices and allow students to observe, write about, and discuss people. She argues that “[o]ur study of characters, themes, symbols, and language lends itself to the understanding of human nature.” (p. 92) and explores how teaching ethnography and having students voice their experiences as the participant-observer is a means to foster, develop, deepen, and display transformative learning, while reading, students observe, and through analysis and discussion, they can engage in something similar quite similar to ethnography. Through the study of literature and other texts as mentioned earlier in this chapter, students explore humanity, culture, and human experiences. Arias (2008) outlines the many benefits for student learning that arise when literature and texts are studied with an ethnographic lens. Ethnography projects reinforce agency in the student writer. Students find their voice when they embrace the process of discovery and places students in the position to see themselves as products of culture. Also, the ethnographic lens bridges the gap between self-reflection in journaling and critical thinking in literary analysis. Furthermore, it helps students to develop intrinsic motivations. When students are motivated and care about

what they are writing about, writing improves (Arias, 2008). Teachers can ask students to take a step back and act as an objective observer as they analyse the text and examine an “other”. Students would then engage in an analysis of their “discoveries” whereby they would address how the other is portrayed, considering if the portrayal is fair or if assumptions, biases, stereotypes, are conveyed about the “other” in the text. Students would then write to appropriate new knowledge (Arias, 2008, p. 95).

Anae (2014) asserts that creative autoethnography projects can serve as a method for creative representations of “storytelling the self” (p. 114). Students would begin with the creative writing story of the “self” and progress into the creation of an arts-based artefact representing this story of the “self”. Depending on the design and outcomes, these projects afford students the opportunity to engage in the steps of Cranton’s process of transformation.

Implementing various forms of ethnography studies in the SELA2 curriculum presents teachers with opportunities to engage students in some deep learning practices. These projects allow students to go beyond the analytic studies of texts to explore topics and humanity in a way that engages 21st century skill development and the process of transformation. What's more, these opportunities also allow for students to cooperate with others when these projects are assigned as collaborative ethnographies and autoethnographies.

### **Other Contexts and Production Opportunities**

When teaching Competency three, SELA2 teachers can help students see the practical or real-world applications and serve to demonstrate relevance and promote meaning-making. Golden (2018) discusses the impact that providing realistic scenarios can have on this. Utilizing realistic scenarios on which students can base their writing helps to bridge the gap between theory and application. This does more than just help students transfer information and content.

It promotes critical thinking, analytical reasoning, synthesis, and problem-solving skills (p. 2). Furthermore, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and case-based learning place the meaning-making in the hands of the learner. SELA2 teachers can facilitate this by organizing and conducting debates, discussions, and assigning various written composition pieces centred on relatable situations or scenarios. By fostering meaning-making through these various lessons, content and activities, educators can promote critical thinking and help students make connections and examine relationships for themselves.

### **Opportunities for Reflection**

Apte (2009) stresses the importance of posing reflective questions for each stage of transformative learning. Reflection serves a few functions in the process of transformation. It provides moments for students to contemplate and articulate confirmations and interruptions to their current frames of reference, it works with triggers for transformative learning, and allows for space for students to acknowledge a time retreat or dormancy to develop a new perspective. Apte (2009) describes this reflective questioning process as both “circular and recursive” (pp. 169-170). It is critical the educators continually inspire students to work through these stages to support a transformative learning experience. Many scholars argue the important role played by educators throughout this experience. Educators must be committed to the students’ individual processes.

### **Journaling**

In the SELA2 classroom, journaling activities play an important role in the reflection process. For example, McIntosh (n.d.) discusses the impact that response writing plays in facilitating students’ ability to “clarify their values, explore their feelings and closely examine their own lives.” (p. 3). Reflective writing, such as journaling and reading responses, has the



capacity to organically draw students into the text and help them better think critically about what they are reading and to engage in thoughtful interpretations. Journaling can be an act of critical reflection by affording students the opportunity to confront assumptions (Boyd, 2006). Magro (2012) highlights a number of effective strategies such as group discussions, journal reflections, and self-evaluation responses. The aforementioned methods allow for students to consciously work through their learning, confront activating events, disorienting dilemmas and work through and reflect on transformations they may have experienced.

The practical applications detailed above are among the multitude of methods that educators can draw for potential transformative experiences grounded in the pedagogical practices of Constructivism and NPDL. It is imperative that educators are considerate of assessment and evaluation of deep and transformative learning within the SELA2 context.

### **Evaluation of SELA2 and Assessing 21st Century Skill Development and Transformative Learning**

The QEP affirms that evaluation should act as the impetus of learning. Therefore, evaluation of SELA2 should be based on the development of competencies as a means to support learning. These are opportunities for educators to gather critical data, inform instruction and allow for formative feedback. Furthermore, they serve as opportunities for students to engage in metacognitive practices and reflection.

The central idea of the policy is that evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not learn to be evaluated: they are evaluated in order to learn better. Envisioned as a means for helping students to learn and helping teachers to guide students, evaluation provides the basis for decisions and actions regulating students' learning, both in everyday

situations and at more critical times (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, *Québec Education Plan, Chapter 1: A Curriculum for the 21st Century*, p.15)

Teachers should design evaluation tools such as rubrics and progressions for their formative and summative evaluation contexts. However, they can refer to the ministry of education's evaluation rubrics to guide assessment of the SELA2 competencies.

The assessment of 21st century skills is a little more of a complicated endeavour. From my experiences, the evaluation of the Cross Curricular Competencies are not conducted in a way that promotes meaningful practices despite their value. For this, I suggest that teachers use the *Learning Progressions* from NPDL to gauge student development within these areas. These progressions can be used by students and teachers at the start of the academic year to ascertain students' entry levels and continuously throughout the year to monitor the development of 21st Century Skills. The benefits of using these progressions are two-fold. Firstly, they create a common language and secondly, they serve as precise and measurable ways to design and assess the development of these skills while allowing for important opportunities for feedback, reflections, and metacognitive practices (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018, p. 19; Quinn et al., 2020, p. 91).

Unlike the evaluation of SELA2 competencies and the assessment of student development of 21st century skills, assessing transformative learning should not be a central objective nor would it be as clear cut as grading papers or many of the other more traditional forms of formative assessment and summative evaluation. Cranton, Stuckey & Taylor (2012) suggest an effective strategy to validate the outcome of transformative learning situations is with *The Learning Activities Survey* and through self-reporting techniques. Despite the practicality of a survey and self-reporting, Newman (2012) asserts that verifying transformation can never be

accurate as it relies solely on the interpretation of the learner. Simply because somebody says or believes that they have undergone transformation does not mean it has in fact occurred.

Educators would be remiss to assign grades to these strategies. However, using these tools as part of the culminating reflection process does have benefits for the students. Allowing them to ponder their potential transformation is at the very least a step in the right direction.

## **Implications**

### **Not All Learning Can Lead to Transformative Learning**

Educators striving to inspire change must be aware that not all change is transformational and not all opportunities will result in transformation for all students. True transformation requires some form of interruption or dilemma that results in a permanent and meaningful personal, emotional, cognitive, or behavioural change. This cannot necessarily be achieved through one project, unit of study, etc. Furthermore, the inability to measure students' transformation associated with the project should not necessarily take away from the value of the learning situations that lay the foundation for transformation.

### **Changing Practice While Meeting SELA2 Curriculum Standards**

One of the biggest challenges would be convincing teachers who already feel the strain and pressure of dense curriculums that there is room to employ this framework. Over the years, I have had many discussions with colleagues who have expressed the desire to implement different practices, but who also feel that teaching content-dense courses with uniform examination is limiting. For many, adopting these methods feels risky. They do not feel that they can afford to deviate from the norms when pressured to produce results and follow strict curriculum objectives and outlines. I believe that it is essential that we remind teachers that there are valid and practical methods supporting the integration of these practices in all courses. As

the NPDL asserts, these practices are not intended to change curriculum, but are rather designed to add a layer of depth and a new lens through which to view curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum does not change, but how we teach it will.

The next question is who is responsible for this change? Joksimovic & Manic (2018) assert that educational reform is a complex issue pertaining to a complex system. Whole system change involves that all stakeholders appreciate the complexity that this solution requires. However, the literature also shows that teachers serve a vital role in the success or failure of educational reform. Their proximity to the problems, solutions, and everything else in between makes them key actors and agents for educational change.

To begin an educational transformation, it is critical that there must be an identifiable problem, issue, or goal. According to Hammerness (2010) “visions of the possible” are the source of inspiration and play a critical role in reform efforts (p. 1033). However, teachers’ visions are often secondary to those of educational leaders.

Yet, despite good intentions, few educational reforms have been able to take hold in the last decade due the failure to appreciate the complexity of educational systems (Joksimovic & Manic, 2018). *Complexity Theory* proposes that systems are collections of various elements and actors, and the system functions based on how these elements or actors interact (p.5). For this reason, educational change can be difficult and unpredictable, and not easily transposable or transferable. Taking lessons from ecology, Berlow (2010, as cited in Joksimovic and Manic, 2018) found that the best strategy to incite educational change should neither be a top-down or bottom-up approach, but rather through the activation of “key nodes”. He argues that for the best results, not all agents require the same level of activation to stimulate results. Therefore, for educational change to take hold, only key actors, or nodes would require stimulation.

Furthermore, *Proximity Theory* is the idea that the factors closest to the outcome will have the strongest influence. Therefore, because teachers are nearest to the outcome, they become the nodes which can have a great impact (Muijs, 2010). Activating teachers means encouraging active participants to analyse their own practice, student progress and standards, information sharing, and cooperation. Furthermore, capacity building and professional development proved most effective when teachers serve as influencers.

Negotiating politics and emotions must also be considered when embarking on educational change. Change can be frightening, and education is not immune to the fears or resistance that come with it. Teachers play a critical role in the potential success or failure of any change because of their proximity to the outcome. Change may meet with resistance because teachers feel that they are in some way being threatened. Therefore, moving at the right pace and understanding how politics factor into the scenario are critical for success. Encouraging collaboration can decrease the perceived threat as well as cultivate a stronger team culture and better navigation of the politics that pervade education (Zembylas, 2010).

Working together is arguably an area of weakness in education. Although teachers work in buildings filled with people, the very nature of the profession in many ways is insular and separate. Stroll (2010) asserts that capacity building is dependent on developing strong learning partnerships across all levels of education. It requires strong commitments to openness and time. Establishing connections has the immense power to incite change, but only if we capitalize on its power and collective energy. Working with staff members closest to the outcome allows for good practices to be identified and shared while at the same time drawing attention to the barriers that exist in these contexts. Ultimately, it is not just about changing practice, but about

challenging our way of thinking. It is about asking ourselves: *why do we do what we do?* (Ainscow & Goldrick, 2010, p. 880).

### **Student Perspectives**

While much of the literature previously reviewed discusses the importance of giving voice and establishing connections between all facets of education, one key component has been neglected. This is the students' voice. According to Thompson (2010) there is an increasing interest in involving young people in educational change. Teachers often begrudge the policy decisions forced upon them by decision-makers and administrators. Surely, students feel the same. They are often neglected in discussions and discourse pertaining to their own education. Some may ask why should young people be included in the discourse? The answer is simple, as educators, we must assume that students have voices worth listening to. They can offer perspectives that no other stakeholder can. Students are "expert witnesses" whose insight can prove to be an invaluable resource for educational reform. Arguably, making lasting changes are dependent on having buy-in from those affected. This includes both teachers and students alike. Through consultation practices, participation, and governance, students' can exercise their voice in decision making (Thomson, 2010, p. 814). Real engagement in students' voices can inform how teachers perform in the classroom.

### **Looking Forward**

After completing this research, I feel both excited and overwhelmed with the potential that transformative learning in conjunction with NPDLE vision for education has for the SELA2 classroom. Students should be exposed to a rich variety of texts as a method to foster deeper understanding of self and of others. These texts go beyond the fiction. Films, poetry, articles, visual art, and music are all modes of potential transformative learning situations. Variety is

important when teaching SELA2, but it is also important to not move too quickly. Each topic should be allocated the time it deserves. Literature and other texts have the profound power and unique means to transport readers anywhere, at any time, and with anyone. It is this potential that makes literature a powerful tool when seeking to create SELA2 learning situations which are transformational, centred on the principles and objectives outlined by NPDL, and considerate of the development of 21st century skills. Newman (2012) argues that the concept of transformative learning is flawed and should be replaced with the term *good learning* (p. 36). However, I argue that regardless of whether the aim is to provide students with a transformative experience, or just “good learning”, it is the opportunity that matters. The chance we provide students to read and explore new ideas they would not have otherwise is a step in the right direction, a step all SELA2 educators should afford the time to take.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter I have outlined the Instructional Design Framework for Deep, Meaningful and Transformative Learning in SELA2 and presented some practical applications that can be used by SELA2 teachers in this context. This chapter also briefly discussed potential evaluation and assessment tools for various aspects of the framework. Lastly, I conclude this chapter by considering some of the implications involved in the adoption of the framework in SELA2 classrooms.

### **Conclusions**

It is evident that teachers cannot teach transformation but lay the foundation for a potential transformative learning experience to occur. Educators who strive to create environments conducive to transformation should be open to the multiple ways true, everlasting change can manifest. Furthermore, our students arrive to our classes with unique and personal

goals, experiences, perspectives, and readiness for change. As such, transformation cannot be guaranteed. Cranton (2002) sums this up well when she states: “we cannot teach transformation. We often cannot even identify how or why it happens. But we can teach as though the possibility always exists that a student will have a transformational experience” (pp. 70-71).

Education in the youth sector differs from that of the adult sector. While transformative learning is a theory of adult education, there are ways that educators can lay the groundwork for transformative experiences. At the very least, youth sector education can plant the seeds for potential transformation. Education can equip students with the tools to be open for discourse and practices that will aid in future transformative experiences.

It is my stance that providing students with more opportunities to engage in critical thinking, communication, citizenship, collaboration, and creativity grounded in the principles of NPDL can open the door for transformation. Through the use of some of the practical applications mentioned earlier in this chapter, educators can promote a transformative experience as well as facilitate a learning environment aimed at helping students engage in deep learning. Furthermore, education and the role of teachers in the classroom must continue to evolve with the times. Today’s students require skills and competencies that will serve the dynamic and rapidly changing realities of the 21st Century. Educators should move away from traditional styles of teaching that function based on the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge, and allow for more flipped classroom approaches, collaborative learning, and the use of a variety of methods and technologies to meet these needs. When embarking on classroom methodologies that foster deep, meaningful and transformative learning experiences, it is critical that the teacher adopts the role of activator/facilitator.



Educators often feel that decisions are made for them by those who have little, or no real classroom experience. When the goal is to adopt new, progressive pedagogies it is essential that teachers are made aware of the mutual benefit of developing meaningful collaborations between other educators and experts. Similarly to Darling-Hammond (2010), I think that we need to move away from the Fordist factory model systems which stress compliance, repetitive and rote tasks, or the one-system approach. While the QEP overtly asserts that this is not the intention of the program, there are many instances where this is the reality in the classroom. Interestingly, countries whose educational systems allow for more flexibility and give their teachers more freedom, perform better than those who are stricter (Hargreaves, 2010). Effective education must see an increased adoption of pedagogical practices that provide students with fair and equitable opportunities to meet their potential and that promote deep learning and lay the groundwork for transformative experiences, those that give students more voice and agency, and allows for them to learn through practice, experience, and formative assessments as a means to engage them in authentic, relevant learning for the 21st Century. Like Muijs (2010) asserts, I believe the practices employed by teachers can have some of the most significant impact on student outcomes. It is critical that teachers are aware of the power that they have in the classroom in order to promote learning for all students (Cochrane-Smith, 2010, p. 461).

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