

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLEGE PROGRAMMING IN THE TRADES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

*Author:  
Cheryl L. O'Connell*

### **ABSTRACT**

Pan-Canadian public post-secondary trades programming has traditionally encompassed foundation and apprenticeship training. Canadian based trades programming encompasses training designed to meet the needs of industry while achieving the technical competencies required to realize the esteemed Red Seal credential as articulated by industry and government. As industries continue to diversify and small business continues to expand globally, an opportunity exists to enhance traditional College based trades programs, to prepare graduates for opportunities within the small business sector. The enhancement of traditional programming in the form of diversification through an interdisciplinarity trades training model is under consideration. Interdisciplinary programming which moves beyond the trades and encompasses relevant business and entrepreneurship skills.

Over the years the correlation between educational achievements, income levels, and regional economic well-being has been a common topic. The acknowledgement that education, workforce development and related policy should ideally work in sync has prompted discussion and contemplation as to how best to advance with innovative educational programming, while strengthening engagement with industry and commerce. The increasing need for education to align with workforce considerations is the genesis behind the research study. An opportunity exists to inform the evolution of an educational framework which will formalize a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary trades training model aligned with small business development and entrepreneurship.

From a systems perspective the researcher is identifying internal and external variables and necessary mechanisms to support interdisciplinary trades programming within a public post-secondary college setting. Given the changing landscape in academia, the researcher is exploring the practicality of an interdisciplinary programming framework, while promoting the role of leaders in higher education in the advancement of programming to meet the labour market needs of the 21st Century. Although the research is in progress, the framework will prompt thoughtful and provoking discussion, while informing and challenging the opportunities and preconceptions.