

PHENOMENOGRAPHIC LEARNERS

relational approach to Information Literacy in the context of distance education D. Min. students

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ABSTRACT

This poster addresses the concept of phenomenographic or the relational approach to information literacy and examines the theoretical framework as well as the practical application of this method in information literacy instruction for distance education students. It is based on the author's experience with the Doctor of Ministry students at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, ON in a period of one year. The method applied in this study is largely based on S. Andretta's contribution to the discussion on the relational approach in IL as well as the author's own observations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The phenomenographic approach to learning is a concept that allows us to describe the learning process through the eyes of a learner, his/her perception of the world, as well as a variety of his/her past and present life experiences.

It originated from the empirical research in educational theory from Sweden in 1970s, led by a team of Ference Marton. The major question of this team of researchers was: "Why do students learn different things from reading the same text?" (Limberg, 2008). Later, in 1997, Christine Bruce applied the phenomenographic approach to IL.

The way of experiencing is a point of reference in phenomenographic research and demonstrates a dynamic relationship between a phenomena and a learner. The relational approach explores "the phenomenon of information literacy from the perspective of people who experience it" (Andretta, 2012, p. 13).

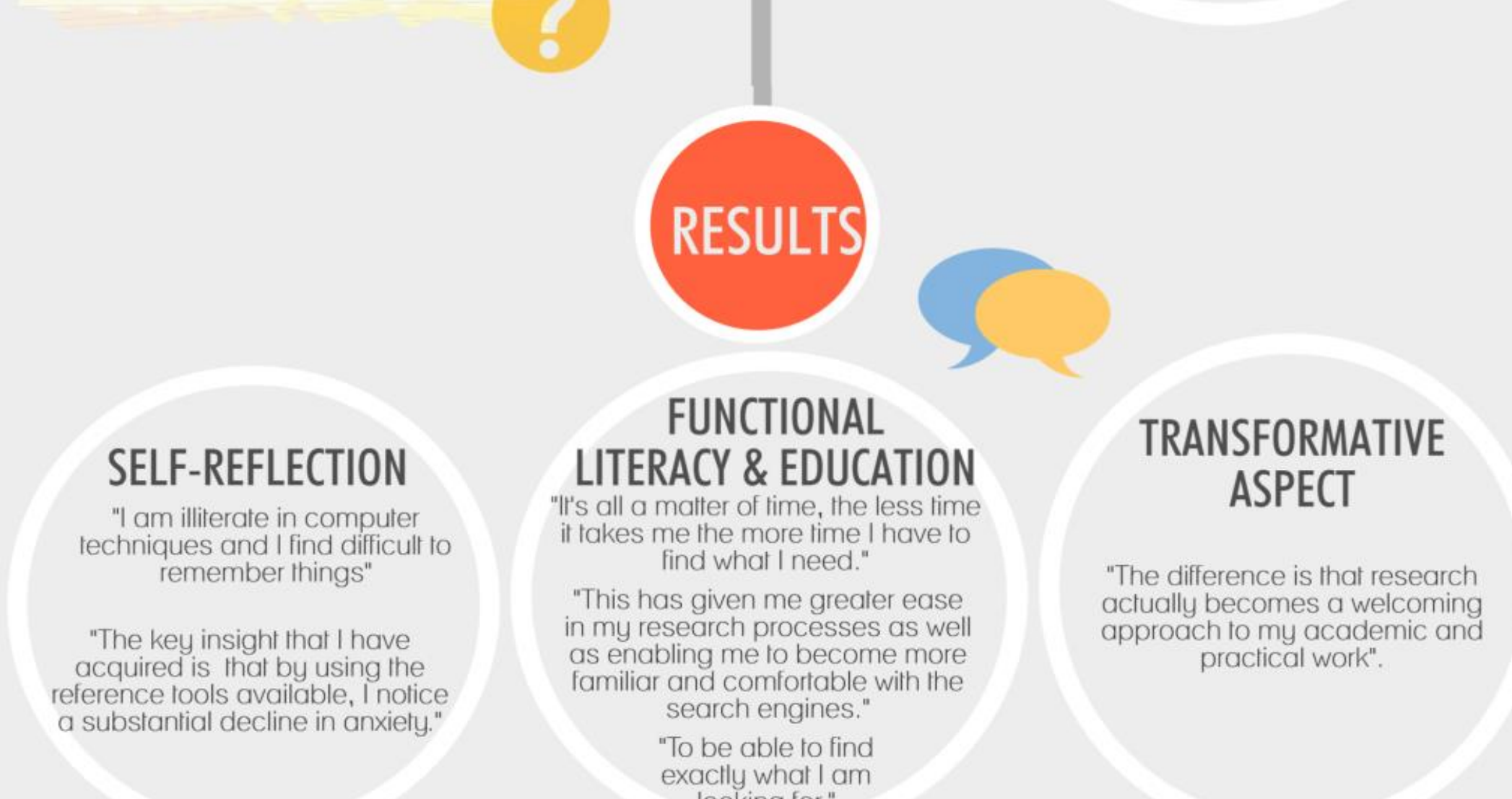
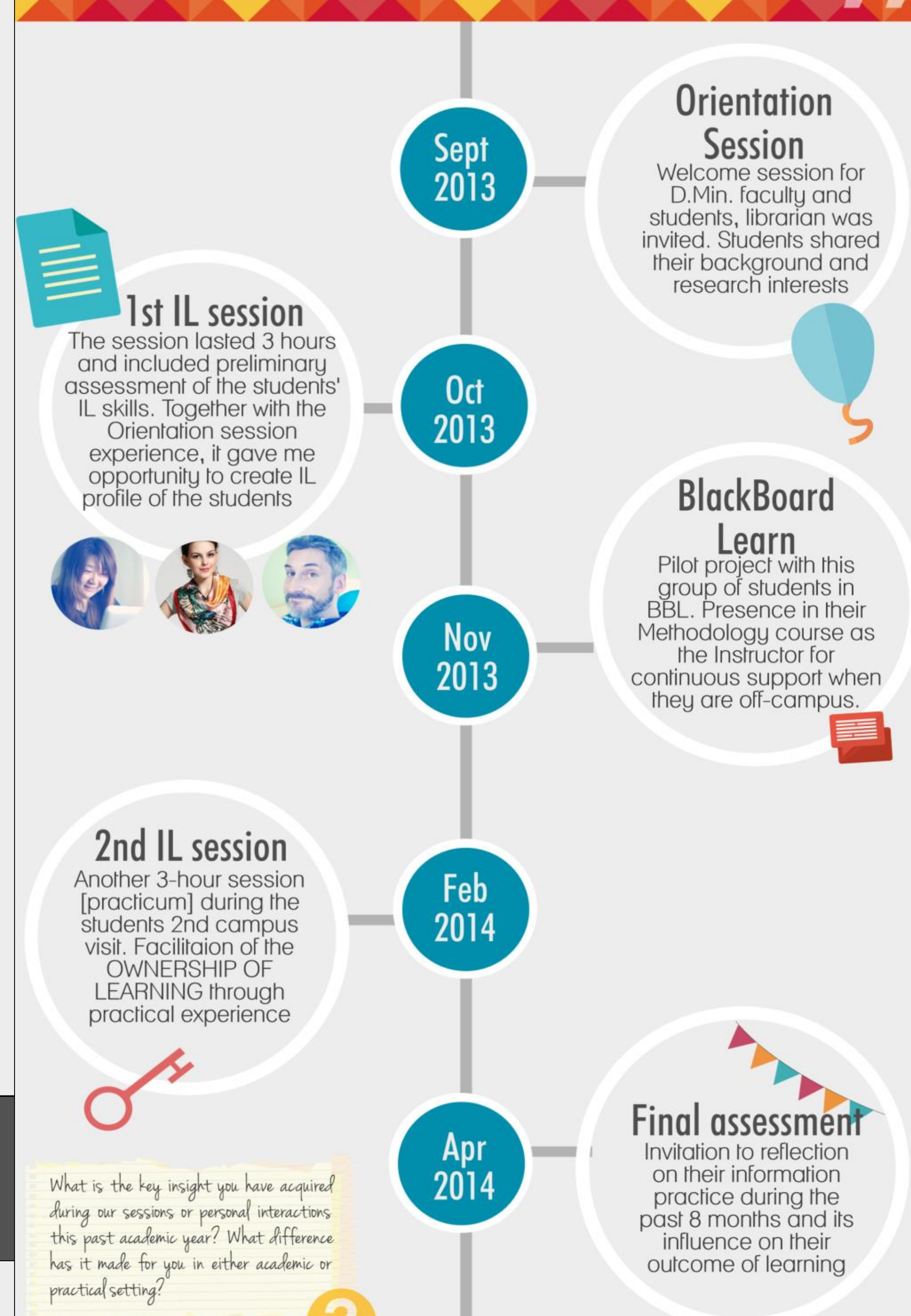
Four categories of IL, according to Andretta:

- Functional Literacy [personal context of the user]
- Information Literacy as Provision [context of information provider]
- Information Literacy as Lifelong Learning [academic context]
- Information Literacy as Education [information education context]

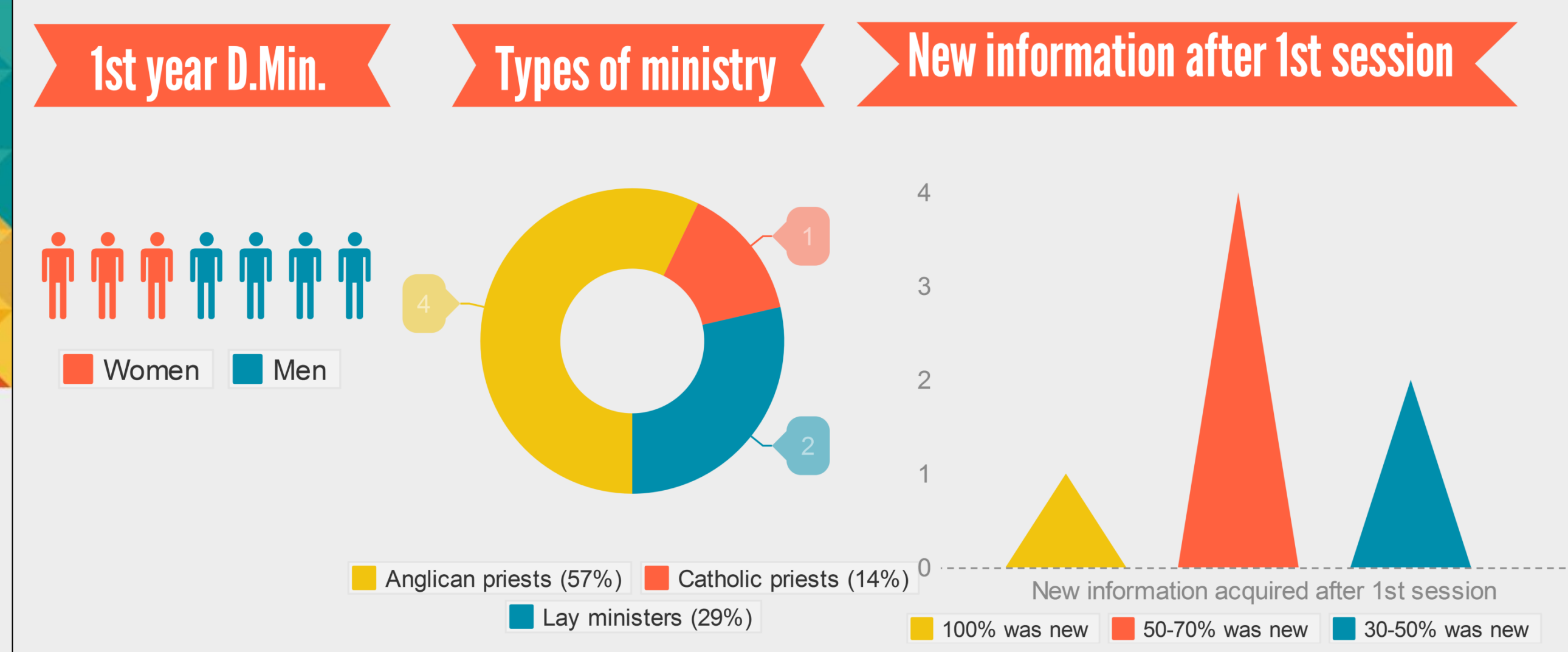
Based on these categories, Andretta developed a "measuring factor" of the impact of IL experience for the learner as "transformation" and "transfer"

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

In the relational view information literacy is conceived from the person's own point of view and includes an awareness of, and engagement with, diverse elements of his or her 'information universe' (Andretta, 2012)



PARTICIPANTS



"Experiences are more fundamental than competences, because they determine the approach employed to complete the task and include the attributes used to accomplish it" (Andretta, 2012, p. 30)

LESSONS LEARNED

- Collaborating with the Faculty was the key to implementing this project
- The relational approach is easier to apply in a small group of students as well as during personal interactions, as it requires individualized approach.
- Measuring transformation and transfer can be challenging and often time-consuming task
- Familiarizing with the students' frame of reference with respect to information searching was very helpful for the sessions design and for observing their transformational change at the end of the academic year

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Learning should be seen as a qualitative change in a person's way of seeing, experiencing, understanding, conceptualizing, something in the real world (Marton and Ramsden, 1988)



METHODOLY & DESIGN

My methodology is based on S. Andretta's theoretical framework entitled "Facilitating Information Literacy Education" (FILE). It uses a three-step strategy to apply relational approach in a classroom.

The relational approach is using a student-centered approach with a special focus on students' perception of content. The focus is also placed on the identity of a learner and his/her self-discovery through transformation [qualitative change in a way students conceptualize and practice IL] and transfer [application of acquired knowledge].

