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The Nexus of Policy, Practice, and Payment

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FEMINISM AND ADULT EDUCATION: THE NEXUS OF POLICY, PRACTICE, AND PAYMENT¹

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Abstract

This article provides a critical feminist analysis of the intersection of policy, practice, and decisions about funding for women's learning and activism. Beginning with a discussion of the current Canadian context, the authors then examine the international context via three United Nations-level policies affecting funding priorities for women's lives: the CONFINTEA international conferences on adult education, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The authors consider efforts to broaden citizen engagement such as participatory budgeting and explore examples of specific women's organizations that are creating spaces for democratic participation in the international sphere.

Résumé

Cet article offre une analyse critique féministe de l'intersection de la politique, de la pratique et des décisions au sujet du financement de l'apprentissage et de l'activisme des femmes. Après une discussion du contexte canadien actuel, les auteurs examinent le contexte international à travers les politiques aux trois niveaux des Nations Unies qui touchent les priorités du financement pour la vie des femmes : les conférences internationales sur l'éducation des adultes (CONFINTEA), les objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement (OMD), et la Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes (CEDAW). Les auteurs considèrent les efforts visant à élargir la participation des citoyens tels que les budgets participatifs

1 This article arose from conversations we have had while co-writing a book on feminism and adult education for the International Issues in Adult Education series of Sense Publishers (Peter Mayo, series editor). That book is due in September 2015. This article, however, is an original and unpublished piece.

et explorent les exemples des organisations particulières de femmes qui créent de l'espace pour la participation démocratique dans la sphère internationale.

Introduction

If Canadian adult educators are any sign, whispers of the death of feminism are premature. Adult education feminist and writer Angela Miles (2013) made this point in her exhaustive collection, *Women in a Globalizing World*, which brought together an amazing array of writers and thinkers on feminism and showed that feminism is a force to be reckoned with locally and globally. The Canadian/South African team Linzi Manicom and Shirley Walters (2012) also focused on feminism when they highlighted the role of community education for women in *Feminist Popular Education in Transnational Debates*. This special issue of the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* is evidence of our renewed optimism for the strengthening engagement of feminism and adult education in this country. This essay brings into the conversation an examination of the international policy context for adult education and women, practice, and issues of payment, questioning the implications for feminist adult educators in an increasingly neo-liberal context.

We note this sense of optimism as a response to recurring questions about feminism's relevance in the 21st century and opponents' categorization of it as a narrowly focused initiative of "special interests." At the policy level, feminism is struggling to regain the visibility it once had in the mainstream press and public discourse, such as the role the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) once played in Canada's constitutional process (Rebick, 2009). As Sylvia Bashevkin (2009) lamented, no other feminist organization in Canada has filled the gap left by NAC in terms of national political presence, as funding and policy spaces have shrunk. She called for greater alliance building to advocate for change. Indeed, feminists have worked across sectors identifying the common sources of injustice; they have made common cause with many grassroots social movements, both old and new, campaigning for rights and protection in the areas of labour, First Nations, gender identity, anti-violence, anti-racism, and the environment (Miles, 2013). In many of these areas, there has been a strong learning and community development component. Sylvia Walby (2011) noted how feminism and its emancipatory goals have been integrated into many sectors of civil society. Yet this mainstreaming and integration have also led to the undermining of feminism's distinctive visibility and contributions to social justice both domestically and internationally.

Over the years, adult educators have also observed the ebb and flow of feminist contributions to learning, such as transformative learning theory (English & Irving, 2012). Recent literature on feminism, community development, and education (Manicom & Walters, 2012; Miles, 2013) in the international realm contrasts with much of the North American literature that appears stalled in earlier research focusing on classroom-based women's learning (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Focus on classroom experience is valid, but it does not encompass feminist learning in the community, where much political learning occurs. The influences of feminist theory and pedagogy have informed broader adult education practice (Brookfield, 2010), but one must ask, to what extent have these practices lost the original political intent? The causes of feminism, such as just labour laws, gender equality policies, and anti-violence legislation, have long been the content and subject of

this politicized learning and policy making, yet feminism's distinct and continuing role was too often absorbed into other aspects of the social democratic tradition of radical adult education. The effort of reviving the political energy of feminism and radical adult education, in the tradition of Jane Thompson (2007) and Paula Allman (2010), is a vital source of political learning for policy change. So the glimmers of hope evidenced in Miles's collection (2013) cannot be overstated. Sustained analyses of the intersectionality of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) can help identify the opportunities for alliance building that Bashevkin (2009) promoted.

Yet the practical challenges to a resurgence of interest in feminism and adult learning in Canada are great, given that the infrastructure to mobilize women and engage them in political causes in this country is in tatters. In the heady days of the repatriation of the Constitution in Canada in the early 1980s, it was possible to have major efforts and grassroots involvement in making sure that women's rights were enshrined. The subsequent shackling of Status of Women Canada, the disappearance of funding for NAC (Bashevkin, 2009), and the paltry funding for women's centres in Canada make it hard to think of who would be influential today in enacting policy or creating a meaningful voice for women in this country. Indeed, it is difficult to name a feminist champion in our government or on the national stage. Of great concern is the growing neo-liberal trend to silence women's voices. Witness the cancelling of the Thérèse Casgrain Volunteer Award, established in honour of Casgrain's work to secure women's suffrage in Quebec and for being the first woman to lead a federal party (Stoddart, 2014). With this neo-liberal federal agenda as a backdrop, it is hopeful to see Manicom and Walters (2012), Miles (2013), Carpenter (2012), and Clover (personal communication) raising the feminist flag.

The Education and Learning Dimension

Recent feminist voices in adult education internationally bring a decidedly political learning agenda to the table and reach toward the kinds of political action and learning that are necessary for social transformation. For some voices, such as Sara Carpenter (2012), the vision for adult education involves reaching back to Marx to see how his theories can advance an equitable feminist agenda. Similarly, Margaret Ledwith (2009) in the United Kingdom drew on Gramsci's insights on hegemony, the organic intellectual, and everyday material life to find the arenas in which women's voices and agendas can be heard. Ledwith suggested that Gramsci provides a way forward to think about feminism and its struggles and dreams. Along with Carpenter, she intends to renew community practice by revisiting the older theoretical frameworks and concepts and adapting them in an imaginative way to deepen critiques of neo-liberalism.

As adult educators, we share with feminism a goal of political, economic, and social equality for women, but also the belief that in achieving equality, both the learning process and the movement matter. For adult educators like Manicom and Walters (2012) and Carpenter (2012), feminism always involves a learning and education component. Many women who work at the policy and practice level learned feminism in community-based contexts and need that continued linkage for credibility and effectiveness (Manuh, Anyidoho, & Pobee-Hayford, 2013). A strength of the women's movement in the 1970s was deliberately making links collectively among learning, practice, activism, and policy change. Given that people need to connect to their own experiences to learn, critical adult educators

work to link experience to the larger social structures. Critical adult educators are mindful of the critiques of the individual focus of some areas of feminism and education, such as the recent observation that unpacking Peggy McIntosh's Knapsack of Privilege (see Lensmire et al., 2013) can sometimes lead to participants becoming satisfied with identifying their own privilege, rather than moving to further action and involvement. In some ways, the West has privileged the personal and has not been strong on moving to policy or political feats.

Vis-à-vis Ledwith (2009), effective feminist-infused adult education needs to move beyond the narrow focus on personal experience and the individual. She proposed

potential sites of liberation. These three dimensions are: i) **difference**: age, "race", class, gender, sexual identity, "dis"ability, ethnicity; ii) **contexts**: economic, cultural, intellectual, physical, environmental, historical, emotional, spiritual on another, and iii) **levels**: local, national, regional and global which form a complex set of interrelationships which not only interweave between axes, but which also intertwine on any one axis. (p. 694; emphasis in original)

In bringing these three areas to the fore, Ledwith challenged adult educators to move onward from discussion of difference and experience. The level that is most concerning, and on which adult education in North America has not been strong, is the third, the multiple levels that involve policy, practice, and most of all decisions about who pays. As women's centres close due to funding cuts, feminists need to trace the money trail back to where policy and funding decisions are made. With the backdrop of new publications on feminism and adult education, and with the evident need for more groundwork, policy, and practical action to infuse these theories and writings, as hopeful as they are, we look now to the global sphere to see what is being done on the ground and in the corridors of power to reinvigorate and advance the cause of women internationally. We argue here that the interrelationship between grassroots/local activism and international policy making and practice (Caglar, Prügl, & Zwingel, 2013) are at the heart of feminist visibility in countries, mostly in the Global South, where feminism and gender have not been forgotten, largely due to stunning inequities and challenges for women. In moving beyond our classrooms and our continent, we observe what is happening globally to enact policy, engage political actors, and involve women in funding decisions to see what is possible.

Looking Globally for Insight and Inspiration

In some ways, women in the West have privileged critical analysis and identification of issues in particular organizations and local arenas, or as identified by Ledwith (2009), the old way of identifying patriarchy and oppression. A second option has been most evident in the larger global sphere: finding new strategic ways to resist patriarchy. For example, international agencies and nation-states have chosen to tackle head-on the material issues confronting women by focusing on international agreements and declarations. Over the past two decades, there has been substantial evidence of both progress and regress in the advancement of women's rights in the field of adult education and in broader contexts of human development. Many at the United Nations (UN) level recognize this concern for women, learning, and feminism and are continuing to keep feminist and critical adult education issues central to policy discussions. When the 58th session of the Commission

on the Status of Women met in March 2014 at the UN in New York City (UN Women, 2014), participants explored the many stalled or disappearing commitments on women's empowerment globally. In the words of the Agreed Conclusions from the 58th session, progress has been "slow and uneven" (UN Women, 2014, no. 18). With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which did stress education but only at the primary level, about to expire in 2015, this world gathering took stock of the situation and the funding that had been streamed for many years into primary education only, and called for new strategic directions in which women, "quality" education, and development were given centre stage. They reiterated that many existing declarations, agreements, and instruments need to be revived and acted upon.

Global Agreements

Progressive policies and statements, especially from the UN, have acknowledged the intricate connection between feminism and adult education and their integral role in promoting social democracy and other development goals. The MDGs and other global efforts such as CONFINTEA do not exist alone and are not raising new themes about feminism, education, or development, as they follow in a long line of critical policy efforts that cannot be ignored. Now in 2015, and as the current round of negotiations continue, there is a sense of déjà vu: "Haven't we been here before?" The crux of the issue is how to achieve the hoped-for change. What role does critical adult education (possibly social movement learning) have in this situation? Here we revisit some of the key agreements to take stock.

CONFINTEA. UNESCO's fifth conference on adult education, CONFINTEA V in Hamburg, Germany, in 1997, was notable for the recognition of the importance of both gender and knowledge and the advancement of women through education. Alejandra Scampini (2003) noted the importance of coordinated efforts of women's organizations in promoting these issues at CONFINTEA. A strong adult education presence and the leadership of Canadian adult educator Paul Bélanger were forces to be reckoned with at this conference.

Great hope and enthusiasm for learning were generated at CONFINTEA V for women, adult education, and global change, and this hope was clearly evident in the resulting Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning (UNESCO, 1997). Alas, much of the promise and commitment of this declaration have yet to be realized. As Nellie Stromquist (2013) noted, reflecting on the woeful lack of evidence of substantive progress, part of the problem lies in implementation: "Their discourse (and that expressed in the various other official documents of international conferences) underwent minimal translation into operational levels" (p. 34). More recently, the goals linked to feminism and adult education have slipped off the UN agenda and consequently off funding priority lists of national and regional governments. Stromquist reminded us that CONFINTEA VI in Belém, Brazil, in 2009 did not even mention challenges facing women or identify empowerment as a goal (see also UNESCO, 2009). This silence threatens gains that have been made and thwarts further progress. Although Belém had other strengths, namely an emphasis on non-formal learning, women or women's concerns were not strongly articulated. One wonders if this situation came from the lack of women's participation or the lack of strong feminist voices

at the conference. Stromquist lamented the "predictable path" (p. 34) whereby goals are articulated repeatedly over the years with little evidence of progress, or where the goals are watered down or are voiced with no plan for action. Like Scampini (2003), she sees the role of local women's organizing as the realm where the issues are most clearly understood and where creative solutions are developed, but sadly these contributions tend not to be noticed at the formalized research and policy levels. And as seen in Canada, when grassroots activist organizations struggle for funding, their ability to act is compromised, undermining the accomplishment of any meaningful goals.

MDGs and the post-2015 agenda. To put education within the larger context of human development goals, we turn to the MDGs (see above), which have defined funding and action priorities for human development and poverty reduction around the world for the past decade. Commissioned by the UN's secretary general, the eight MDGs were developed by UN agencies, the international non-governmental sector, researchers, policy makers, and government representatives (Sachs, 2005). Almost immediately, a groundswell of criticism arose from women's organizations that were particularly concerned with the MDGs' narrow definition of women's issues and the apparent ignorance of existing declarations that had been implemented since the 1980s promoting women's empowerment (Barton, 2005). The third MDG—"promote gender equality and empower women" (MDG3)—is often referred to as the "women in education" MDG. Despite its broad, sweeping title, it promotes equality in primary and secondary education for women, though in practice the emphasis has been predominantly on access to primary education for girls, to the detriment of other stages of learning. There is another MDG on maternal health (care of mothers and babies), but it is narrowly focused and does not extend to broader issues of equality and education.

By and large, the MDGs focus on access and service provision and not on a broad understanding of empowerment and rights, thereby ignoring underlying inequalities. Attention needs to be given to the basic issue—not the services per se, as important as they are, but to the underlying causes. To accomplish MDG3, considerable work has to be done on issues of power, patriarchy, and policies, yet it was set without a strong analytical framework or plan to achieve it. It is not enough to say there must be an end to oppression of women—feminists have taken a long time to get to this point, so it cannot be addressed quickly. In some ways, the MDGs are part of the Western mindset and Western ideas that we can reach these goals quickly if only they are identified and named. The work that goes with undoing patriarchy is long and complicated, and it involves not only action but analysis.

By the time this article comes to press, the MDGs will be at their expiry date, given that they were mandated to be achieved by 2015. With accomplishments falling far short of aspirations, attention is now shifting to the post-2015 agenda, which is now being discussed. Women's rights advocates who felt marginalized by the MDG process are determined not to be sidelined this time around as they strive to get the core declarations, conventions, and commitments of decades ago back to the centre of policy and funding. Who is at the table to advocate for this more fundamental change is yet another matter, as are questions of priorities and motivation within the feminist movement. Srilatha Batliwala (2012) gave a frank critique of mainstream feminist organizations that have shown signs of being co-opted, in what she saw as a shift from movement building to organization building. In her view, and the view of many international observers, emphasis on service delivery through feminist organizations thwarts the efforts to continue pushing for more radical change that

addresses root causes of persistent inequality. Batliwala said those groups at the margins have been much more innovative in their practice. While her critiques sting, they are a reminder that needs on the ground are huge and the voices of critics can be hard to hear in the face of mounting poverty, gender inequity, and global violence that directly affects women and children. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs), it must be said, are at the frontlines and make hard choices every day.

CEDAW: A policy of one's own. One of the most important guiding documents for women globally is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; United Nations, 1981), which was adopted in 1979 and ratified in 1981. CEDAW has a concern that “in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs” (para. 8). Despite the fact that it is decades old, CEDAW is one of the cornerstones of the feminist movement internationally. It is held up as the document that obliges nations to take issues of gender inequality seriously and develop concrete actions to combat it. In the wake of the losses for women in CONFINTEA VI and in the MDGs, women globally hearken back to the promises of that document and draw on its insights and promises for current debates and challenges (Terry, 2007). CEDAW serves as a reminder that women need equal opportunities for access to programs of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programs, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women. While feminists might look askance at many public policies and question the need for global bodies like UNESCO, there is a strength in drawing on them to enhance women's roles and education. They serve as reminders of world commitments and understanding of the complex global problems women face. The ongoing challenges are due not to a lack of awareness or evidence, but to a chronic lack of understanding and political will for implementation to deal with the issues once and for all.

On Policies, Laws, and Education

Yet once these policies and documents are being considered or even implemented, it is imperative that the grassroots, many of whom helped them come to fruition, be able to read, comprehend, and work with them as they are political and power-laden. As Rosalind Eyben (2012) reminded us, “Policies are instruments of power that classify and organise ideas and social relations to sustain or change the current social order” (p. 17). She then explained how this power is contested and challenged and proposed ways for activists to be more effective in their advocacy work. Indeed, they can work for women and in their favour—they are political tools to be strengthened and used.

To understand and work with global pronouncements, legal documents, government policies, and the political system globally and locally requires what Jim Crowther and Lyn Tett (2012) described as political literacy: knowledge that enables people to interrogate the experts. In explaining this type of literacy, Crowther and Tett drew the distinction between learning for conformity and learning for dissent, while supporting the latter. They defined the purpose of literacy as “making power visible and accountable” (p. 123). Being politically savvy about policy and policy making is challenging and speaks to a role for adult educators. If adult educators are to be effective at the most basic of levels, they have to be involved in educating women about rights, policies, and laws.

At their heart, much of education and law/policy work is analysis of power, as Rosalind Eyben (2012) highlighted in her study of women's unpaid care work. She described the effects of the assumptions around "evidence-based" policy making that begins with the assumption that policy is created through the analysis of sound evidence. In this type of policy making, it is understood that if an issue is absent from policy, then the evidence highlighting the issue is flawed or has been poorly communicated. But what is really going on is "strategic ignorance"—to acknowledge the issue would take too much work and too much money to resolve. If it is a systemic problem, then the system needs to be changed for it to be resolved (see pp. 12–13). Like Eyben's issue of trying to make unpaid care work quantifiable in economic terms, it is near impossible to make all women's issues count. Playing by their rules can undermine the crux of the issue, which is a lesson that women's groups may need and which calls for education locally and globally, especially when it comes to the UN and nation-states.

Learning from Practice in the Global South

These global agreements, policies, and initiatives are being carried out in a very strategic way in the South, far removed from Western discourse analysis and identity politics. The material world and needs of education, food, shelter, and safety for women come starkly to the fore. They move from analysis and policy to action and spending. While much is spoken of the praxis cycle of reflection, consciousness raising, and action, too often it is repeated as a mantra without renewed scrutiny of what it looks like in practice and how adult education practice renews and adapts to changing circumstances and new theoretical insights. In the feminist literature within social sciences, considerable attention is paid to the importance of policy-level change and the need to ground this work continually in grassroots experience for validity and efficacy. While many North American conversations on women remain limited to conceptual analysis and at times to the personal and classroom level (e.g., Hayes & Flannery, 2000), it seems wise to look to the South, where many creative and effective movements are playing out. This section looks at one process of participatory democracy that is growing in popularity—participatory budgeting. Attention is then given to specific international women's organizations that are creating spaces for democratic participation.

Participatory Budgeting

A rising trend in engaging grassroots citizen participation in public processes, participatory budgeting, is garnering attention among adult educators (Foroughi, 2013; Lerner, 2010; Pinnington & Schugurensky, 2010). Participatory budgeting processes like the model developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and now elsewhere, are intended to involve citizens in the allocation of public funds for projects and programs, presenting myriad opportunities for learning among citizens and bureaucrats alike. Lerner described people's activities in this process, which typically follow these steps: "diagnosis, discussion, decision-making, implementation and monitoring" (p. 243), and summarized some of the learning that has been identified from participating in the steps, from identifying projects to ensuring successful completion. Knowledge and skill development in participatory budgeting is diverse, ranging from practical technical and political know-how to increased confidence and awareness of the situation of others. Lerner also emphasized the learning by staff and

politicians to raise their consciousness of community issues and perspectives and engage in more effective and authentic collaboration with community participants.

Feminists caught in the ongoing struggle of trying to get funding might welcome such an opening for participation in the allocation of public funds. Looking to the evolution of the process in Recife, Brazil, some key lessons have been identified for including gender in the participatory budgeting process. Removing barriers to access, such as providing child care, and raising awareness of the need to invite women specifically have helped increase involvement (Zarzar, Meneses, & Azavedo, 2002). Setting up the model alone is not enough. A further trend within participatory budgeting is to focus directly on women's issues as part of this budgeting. Through gender-based budgeting, citizens are able to address the issues that confront women globally (Eyben, 2012). Beyond opening the space for women's participation, an example from Cotacachi in Ecuador tracks the progress of traditionally marginalized indigenous women whose actions in the participatory budgeting process led to specific programs to ensure rural inclusion and to reduce illiteracy (López & Adanali, 2007). The literacy strategy was so effective that the UN has declared Cotacachi the "first illiteracy-free canton in Ecuador" (in López & Adanali, p. 12).

Gender-based participatory budgeting allows women to have a voice in issues that confront them daily in caring for their families. Citizens in Cotacachi have shown remarkable leadership in acknowledging this fact and putting women in strategic locations to decide on their future. Practices like participatory budgeting allow citizens to become more economically literate and to make decisions about the welfare of their families and communities. This collective decision making helps everyone participate, learn, build healthy public policy, and maintain public accountability for community investment. Beyond having a voice in how tax money is spent, the learning that occurs through the process itself is vitally important. By involving citizens in decision-making processes traditionally reserved for experts, bureaucrats, and politicians, participatory budgeting has the potential to empower those citizens.

One problem, however, is that participatory budgeting is an "invited space" (Miller, Veneklasen, Riley, & Clark, 2006) for participation, with limits imposed from those in charge. The budget is typically small, focused on deciding on local projects and allocating limited funds to the successful applicants. This doesn't look much different from the vicious circle of project funding that has plagued women's centres for years. That said, the concept is useful, and as long as educators remain aware and critical of its potential, they can carve spaces for learning that can be transferred for bigger goals elsewhere. The solutions for complex issues are a mixture of large-scale and small-scale efforts such as this one. Given the repeated calls for alliance building, this democratic space, despite its limitations, has the potential to be a rich learning venue for the inclusion of feminist analysis to issues of mutual concern and to be a space to find allies to collaborate in social action.

Women's INGOs

Along with specific strategies like participatory budgeting at the ground level, women's INGOs are key sites for change and development for women. Although some critiques see large organizations losing touch with the grassroots, nonetheless they have a vital role due to their wide reach, networking abilities, and financial stability, which can help open spaces for the smaller activist organizations. In particular, we highlight a few unabashedly feminist

organizations that place learning and activism for policy change at the centre of their work. Their creative work is not often recognized in the mainstream of adult education literature, which is a shame, as these three illustrate exemplary practices of organizational leadership (CREA), analysis of political power (JASS), and funding (AWID).

CREA. CREA (originally called Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action), based in New Delhi, India, has an international reach in its programs to educate and train women at the local levels in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (CREA, 2014). The organization has several areas of interest, but its feminist leadership training focus is most informative. CREA describes its work this way: “By building on the theory and practice of feminist leadership, and developing understandings about the intersections of sexuality, gender, rights, and development, CREA seeks to support feminist leaders who can further the transformative goals of the feminist movement” (para. 2).

The use of the term “developing understandings” is CREA’s modest way of representing its many informal and non-formal educational activities for helping organizations develop leadership that is truly feminist and transformative in thought and action. Batliwala (2011) emphasized, “Feminist leadership means the ability to influence agendas even without the formal power or authority to do so, and the capacity to leverage larger-scale changes (in policy, legal rights, social attitudes, and power relations) with very marginal resources” (p. 66). CREA has remade the feminist movement in its own way by focusing on the intersection of real-life issues—not just identity issues, but the issues of rights and development, along with gender and sexuality. Just looking at what is happening for women in organizations such as this in the Global South makes it clear that feminists in the West have a long way to go to catch up in terms of sustaining interest and explicitly connecting education to rights and policies. It is this broad-based approach that characterizes INGOs like CREA and sets them apart.

JASS. An example of the effectiveness of an umbrella INGO for women’s popular education and empowerment is JASS (Just Associates, Washington), which has a global reach bringing together many funders and donors to support education and development work in South Asia, southern Africa, and Latin America. Their focus is on movement building and developing the skills to strengthen movements through research, education, alliance building, and political mobilization (JASS, 2014). They have been actively involved in bringing a feminist lens to analyses of power (e.g., Miller et al., 2006). For example, a program in Malawi helps women describe themselves and their experiences in terms of power and ways to challenge power on multiple levels. For these women, the “personal is political” in a very active way, and they have taken their activism from the home and brought it to brokering with local chiefs and government representatives and to organizing their own networks and organizations in constructing budgets and plans that address their needs. The empowerment programs link with issues in a range of sectors, such as ensuring enactment of public health funding commitments in Malawi (JASS, 2013).

AWID. Feminist INGOs are the bridge between policy and funding. Once the policy has been created, as with the JASS case noted above, sustained efforts at implementation are required. The Association of Women in Development (AWID) made this point clearly in one report in a three-part series on women and funding—Women Moving Mountains: The

Collective Impact of the Dutch MDG3 Fund (Batliwala, Rosenhek, & Miller, 2013). The report offered valuable evidence to support what women's organizations have been claiming for a long time about aid effectiveness. They provided research evidence to support what women's organizations have said for years—how short-term funding cycles cannot hope to have the same impact as secure, flexible funding over the long term. Long-term support resulted in organizations “increasing their legitimacy and credibility as an organization (74%), strengthening their organizational systems (71%), building their human resource base (71%), enhancing the role of young women activists in their organizations and movements, and strengthening a range of other capacities” (p. 69). Just as participatory budgeting offers an opportunity for activists to develop local-level public budgeting skills, AWID's research makes an important contribution to helping women demystify funding mechanisms and bring forward evidence to advocate for changes in budgeting processes at a broader level.

To be successful, organizations such as CREA, JASS, and AWID usually start in the local community and build up using social and economic capital in the process. Alison Gilchrist (2009) drew attention to the social capital involved in organizations and movements, noting that linkages and networks are more important than ever. Yet in contexts of community work, she observed that this capital is being fragmented through short-run project-funding cycles, making it harder than ever to accomplish strategic goals. The benefits of the networking are “slow burning,” so it is hard to demonstrate measurable results in standard evaluation frameworks. Using complexity theory to embrace this chaos, which brings vibrancy and diversity to networks, Gilchrist described how community development has a role to provide spaces for networks to grow and flourish.

Against this backdrop of Southern efforts and exemplars of feminist adult education for change, we turn now to some of the implications for adult education locally and internationally.

Implications for Adult Education and Feminism

International direction and policies to advance the cause of feminism and education for women have sometimes fallen short, especially in terms of global policy and efforts to make change possible. Yet there are glimmers of hope in specific practices like gender-based participatory budgeting and organizations. In looking to the Global South, there are ways for Canadian women to put our ideas, hopes, and aspirations for feminism into effect.

The cases from the South show that an engaged participatory democracy can strategically employ adult education practices. Given the immediate material needs of the indigenous peoples in Cotacachi, Ecuador, for example, immersion was needed (López & Adanali, 2007). Time out for schooling in budgeting was not available, so the participants learned through non-formal and informal means. In safe and engaged spaces like the thematic stream for women's budgeting in Porto Alegre, women enhanced capacity and economic literacy and created a community space imbued with immediate learning intents, an adult education initiative for women. Yet it is important to note that participatory practices at the community level do not exist in isolation. They are supported and abetted by international policies such as CONFINTEA's *Hamburg Declaration* (UNESCO, 1997) and other UN-level goal statements. While it can sometimes be dispiriting to think of what is lost in some

of these policies and at the global level, the global community of practice can provide inspiration.

From the perspectives of community and international development, feminist writers like Miles (2013) and Ledwith (2009) are creating a resurgence of hope for a feminist-oriented and feminist-inspired adult education sphere. They remind us that feminism’s unique contributions to adult education—that is, addressing social and economic issues—are important. There is a caution that, in blending feminism with social democratic or other social movements, indeed the infusion or mainstreaming of feminism with any and all partners uncritically is problematic in that it risks the clear and articulate ground that feminism gained. We need to prevent the disappearance of our feminist agenda and the misattribution of feminism’s achievements with the state. In order to have a critically oriented adult education field that is truly about inclusion, protection of worker education, and higher education, not to mention literacy programming, we need to keep putting feminism on the agenda and acting upon it through critical adult education policies and practices. One way to do this is to think larger, to look outward to our sisters around the globe, and to cast our gaze beyond formal education to informal, non-formal policy and practice.

Indeed, it is increasingly clear that policy and practice, politics, and more importantly funding become the axes on which women’s learning is promoted, defined, and enacted. Policy and practice dictate funding priorities, and funding dictates practice. It comes as no surprise to anyone experienced with AWID’s findings (Batliwala et al., 2013) that the short-term project-funding cycle for organizations is inefficient and drains potential for sustained activism and change. Adult education for social justice cannot thrive in these conditions. The international sphere sheds light on the vibrancy and networking needed to avoid the whims of politically manipulated funding regimes.

At the global level, adult education involves community development and organizing, social movements, policy making, and political literacy. Similarly, feminism is more than women’s individual empowerment—it is about communities working to change inequitable structures. As a joint force, feminism and adult education are collaborators working with people, for people, for change. The particular strength of collective voices for feminism and learning on the international stage is that they honour the primacy of the critical. Though some have focused on feminism and the community (e.g., Ledwith, 2011), feminist organizations internationally have included a decided educational focus that embraces both social movement learning and feminist pedagogy, which have been rich parts of feminism’s practice. There is a learning nexus here of critical adult education and feminism, one that poses provocative questions about what it means to infuse and sponsor social transformation learning at the community (social movement, non-formal, and informal learning) level as well as in more formal educational arenas. This nexus may also be a way to put intersectionality into practice, not just a theory but a way for people to see the worth of a whole range of theoretical/practical perspectives.

Conclusions

In many ways, the voices and practices of groups like AWID and writers like Miles (2013) are reminders of adult education’s historical commitment to process, content, and lifelong learning traditions in the struggle for a progressive feminism to effect policy

change. Adult education has a long history of recognizing the links and common goals of feminism, radical adult education, and social democracy. Stories of Canadian suffragettes like Thérèse Casgrain (Tremblay, 2010) illustrate that feminists, using the tools at their disposal, especially educational and learning tools, have often been educators and promoters of progressive policy. Feminist adult educators bring critical voices that push beyond formal classroom learning and individual experience, divorced from our larger social and economic structure. They cast their gaze to the international sphere to see where policies have been enacted and challenged and to see what partners in the Global South can teach about learning, policy, and critical decision making. Yet they continue to work with women at the grassroots level to increase their practical and analytical skills to claim a place in policy making.

There is cause for feminists in Canada and abroad to be optimistic. The articulation of rights through broad-based policy statements such as CEDAW and, more recently, the discussions for the post-2015 congresses on future priorities make it clear that feminist adult education is alive and well, working with partners globally to change the world. Adult education is in a very good place these days.

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