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LINKING THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
OF CANADA'S UNIVERSITY CONTINUING
EDUCATION UNITS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER FOR
POST-PANDEMIC TIMES

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LINKING THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF CANADA'S UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER FOR POST-PANDEMIC TIMES

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Abstract

In this conceptual paper based on ideas proposed by Gilson and Goldberg (2015), we consider how themes in the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education from 2010 to 2020 and other themes from the broader post-secondary education literature inform a conceptual framework for university continuing education units in a post-pandemic world. In turn, a descriptive snapshot of the lived experience of one continuing education unit in 2020 to early 2021 will serve as extra value for the reader. This consideration of the unit relative to the emergent conceptual model points to the future of continuing education practice in universities for years to come.

Résumé

Dans le présent article conceptuel fondé sur les idées proposées par Gilson et Goldberg (2015), nous examinons en quoi les thèmes présents dans la Revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes entre 2010 et 2020, ainsi que d'autres présents dans la littérature de l'éducation postsecondaire plus large, façonnent un cadre conceptuel pour les unités de formation continue universitaires dans un monde post pandémie. De plus, un aperçu descriptif de l'expérience vécue d'une unité de formation continue entre 2020 et le début de 2021 fournira au lectorat une valeur supplémentaire. Cet examen de l'unité en lien avec le modèle conceptuel émergent pointe l'avenir des pratiques de formation continue dans les universités pour les années à venir.

As continuing education professionals and leaders, each with more than 30 years' service in post-secondary settings across Canada, we are pleased to share our insights into the possible future of university continuing education units in our country. In this conceptual

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paper based on Gilson and Goldberg (2015), our work is informed by relevant literatures and the events of 2020 to 2021.

We begin with a short discussion of what a conceptual paper is, followed by a literature review that explores select themes in the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* (CJSAE) from 2010 to 2020 and the broader post-secondary educational literature. Where relevant, we offer connections between the literature and the practice of continuing education as it occurred in 2020 and 2021. Subsequent to this literature review, we present a conceptual model as the entry point into a discussion of how one continuing education unit in central Canada responded to the realities of COVID-19 and is presently building toward a promising future. We close the paper with insights into and recommendations for the future of university continuing education units in Canada.

What Is a Conceptual Paper?

As editors of a special issue dedicated to conceptual papers for the journal *Group and Organization Management*, Gilson and Goldberg (2015) explained how they entertained questions from colleagues and potential authors about the idea of a conceptual paper. Questions included "Are conceptual papers just papers without data? Are conceptual papers different from theoretical papers? What about review papers, are they different from these?" (p. 128). Through their efforts to respond to these queries, Gilson and Goldberg arrived at the following: conceptual papers should "provide an integration of literatures, offer an integrated framework, provide value added, and highlight directions for future inquiry. Papers are not expected to offer empirical data" (p. 128). In short, conceptual papers do not have data because their focus is on integrating and proposing new relationships among constructs.

In this paper, which offers insights into university continuing education units in a post-pandemic world, the focus includes informing literatures, a proposed framework, and a sense of the future based on a snapshot of one university continuing education unit as it has responded to the pandemic and is making choices for the future.

The Informing Literatures

Key Themes, Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education

As a respected repository of work by Canadian adult and continuing education scholars (Boshier, 2011; St. Clair, 2011), CJSAE is the natural place to begin this literature review. In his role as editor of CJSAE at the time, Nesbit (2011) remarked:

Scholarly journals play a pivotal role in the life of any academic field... journals not only represent the knowledge base of a given discipline, but also reflect its history, trends, research norms and social structure of communication between scholars and others with professional expertise. This is particularly relevant in a comparatively new and diverse academic and practitioner-oriented field like adult education. (p. ii)

Given the purpose of this paper to explore the role of continuing education units at a critical time in human history, Nesbit's words hold particular relevance. Now is a time when continuing education experts, including its scholars and practitioners, need to have what Nesbit described as "a forum for people to imagine what is possible...to address

the emergent issues affecting Canadian adult education" (2011, p. ii). Even more so than in 2011, we need this forum to communicate practical knowledge embedded in research evidence, to reflect on past practices, and to look forward to new opportunities, emerging trends, and partnerships that derive from global shifts in human experiences, economies, ways of achieving learning, and more (Mizzi, 2020). Although history is punctuated with various events that have led to profound shifts, none has been more dramatic than the pandemic experience of 2020 to early 2021.

Themes found in CJSAE between 2010 and 2020 that have specific relevance in a post-pandemic world include issues of social justice and inequity, prior learning and recognition of the knowledge and skills of adults, the immigrant as learner and worker, and resilience.

Social Justice, Inequity, and Work

As a theme explored in CJSAE from 2010 to 2020, issues of social justice and inequity are uniquely significant today. For instance, in 2020, workers in diverse sectors lost their employment through no fault of their own but due to the impacts of a global pandemic (Chan et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2020). Further, social justice concerns tied to matters of work, race, and the role of women as child-care providers and caregivers rather than as members of the workforce emerged as serious problems in 2020. Extrapolating, the insights of scholars who have examined these difficult realities over time will prove to be helpful as Canadians problem-solve their way socially and economically in a post-pandemic world (Chau, 2020; Heavey & Jemmott, 2020; Lange et al., 2015).

Prior Learning and Recognition of the Knowledge and Skills of Adults

Recognizing and validating existing knowledge and skills in addition to providing opportunities for reskilling and upskilling will be critical to Canada's return to a healthy economy and meaningful lives for workers displaced by the pandemic. While educators have discussed recognition and validation of adult learners' existing knowledge and skills for years, now is the time to operationalize ways of making the expertise of adult learners visible and ascribing them with value. In other words, we need to consider what we have learned during the pandemic and operationalize expedient ways of recognizing what adult learners already know and do while also providing them opportunities to reskill for rapidly changing workplaces (Belisle & Rioux, 2015; Conrad & Wardrop, 2010; Grace, 2014; Kops, 2020; Moss, 2017; Snow & Tulk, 2020).

The Immigrant as Learner and Worker

Canada is a relatively young country, and its future relies on immigration to build a strong and prosperous society. As a large part of the Canadian workforce, immigrant learners and workers need to be supported as they acquire the language, cultural, and other skills they need to be active contributors to a stronger Canada (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2010; Alfred & Guo, 2012; Antropov, 2020; Chatterjee, 2019; Chau, 2020; Shan, 2015). As Canada's large baby boomer population continues to age, the role of the immigrant in Canada is more important than ever before.

Resilience

Going forward, Canadians need to be resilient in both workplaces and teaching and learning contexts. Further, we need to bring this sense of resilience to our use of technology as workers and learners. Positively, there are many lessons about resilience in the contributions of CJSAE scholars from 2010 to 2020 (Bajwa et al., 2020; Grace, 2014; Guo, 2012; Johnson, 2019; Kolenick, 2013; Lange et al., 2015; Mojab & Taber, 2015; Plumb, 2014).

Key Themes, the Broader Post-Secondary Education Literature

Community of Practice Models

The term *community of practice* (CoP) derives from a learning theory connected to the social construction of knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). CoP participants share a common concern or interest, and they come together to fulfill mutual goals (Duguid, 2005). CoPs are especially relevant in continuing education, where learners develop their career trajectories while those who develop programs connect with professional practice communities and industry. CoP members do not have to be co-located in the same physical space, a fact that became clear with the onset of COVID. Instead, they may form a "virtual community of practice" and collaborate through discussion boards, newsgroups, chat tools (Dubé et al., 2005), and web-based conferencing tools. Microsoft Teams is only one of the several virtual platforms that, since spring 2020, has grown exponentially in educational settings and workplaces (Almarzooq et al., 2020). Zoom and Webex are two other technologies being used to support CoPs and other educational applications, including course delivery and meetings (Janes & Carter, 2020a, 2020b).

Interprofessional Teamwork and E-Learning

Interprofessional teamwork was first studied in health care, where health professionals need to work well together and in teams (Curran et al., 2008). It is now present in the e-learning and adult education literatures. For instance, as early practitioners of e-learning, Carter et al. (2016) and Carter et al. (2014) reported how meaningful e-learning requires high-level interprofessional teamwork. In the pivot to e-learning in spring 2020, the importance of interprofessional teamwork in the delivery of courses and programs became fully evident. In some continuing education settings, interprofessional strategies led to the evolution of digital learning exchanges for instructors and others lacking e-learning expertise (Janes & Carter, 2020a). Although the idea of a learning exchange may have been previously associated with an institution's teaching and learning centre (Forgie et al., 2018), in 2020 it emerged in diverse parts of educational institutions, including continuing education units.

New Ways of Conceptualizing Teaching and Learning

The concepts of techno-resiliency (Graham, 2016; Weller & Anderson, 2013) and technology-enhanced teaching and learning have come of age, particularly since the pandemic. While the former refers to an attribute that enables educators to respond to the demands for technology-enabled learning experiences with whatever resources they have, the latter addresses the teaching and learning experience itself.

Instructors and staff need to embrace alternate forms of learning achievement, including but not limited to new forms of skills-based learning through virtual and artificial

intelligence technologies, micro-courses, boot camps, and alternate digital credentials such as badges and micro-credentials (Piedra, 2021; SUNY, 2019). Recognition of prior knowledge and skills, previously noted, will likewise be important as we build new and different economies in a post-COVID world (Gingrich & Rowlinson, 2020; Susskind, et al., 2020; Vegas & Winthrop, 2020).

Social Capital

In the earliest days of continuing education, social capital may not have been called such—however, it existed. In their work on the history of adult and continuing education across Canada, McLean and Carter (2013) identified how, across diverse geographic regions, continuing education extended the networks of the adult learner. Extrapolating beyond the pandemic, the development of social capital within adult and continuing education will occur in three main ways: through excellence in instructional design (Bates, 2019), carefully selected instructors and facilitators with industry and community networks (Carter, 2020), and inclusion of experiential learning and work-integrated learning opportunities for learners (Cerna et al., 2021). Social capital as a means of cultivating resilience and meaningful work and life experiences should not be restricted to certain kinds of programs; rather, it needs to be integrated into all programs, including credit-based, not-for-credit, and community programs.

Access and Accessibility

In Canada and elsewhere, access and accessibility have always been primary drivers in adult learning. The need to accommodate the complex lives of adult learners—including work, home, community, and other responsibilities—has meant offering classes and programs at night and on weekends and, more recently, via online methodologies. Significantly, in the post-COVID world, adult learning will build on Canada's rich history in distance education (Bates, 2017; Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Usher, 2018) and the fact that during the pandemic, continuing education units saw unprecedented numbers of Canadian adults studying online. Although concerns that adult learners had about their work lives appear to have been a key motivator in their decisions to study in spring, summer, and fall 2020, the access and flexibility offered by technology-supported learning are what enabled their studies (Bridgland & Blanchard, 2001; Daniel, 2016; Gordon, 2014).

Of equal importance is the practice of accessibility. According to Accessibility Services Canada, accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, and environments for persons who experience disability. In the adult education context, accessibility refers to the opportunity to access courses, programs, and services without experiencing barriers (de Bie & Brown, 2017). Although we have grown in our practice of accessibility in physical classrooms, comparable growth will need to occur in the areas of online design and delivery.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Adult and Continuing Education

Many continuing education units have been delivering online courses since the early 2000s as well as working through the issues of remote and distance delivery since before 2000. They have, therefore, made important contributions to a rich scholarship pertaining to e-learning (Carter et al., 2014), although these contributions have not always been recognized by the mainstream academy; this gap needs to be addressed. In its fullest sense, scholarship of teaching and learning should include not only more traditional understandings of research

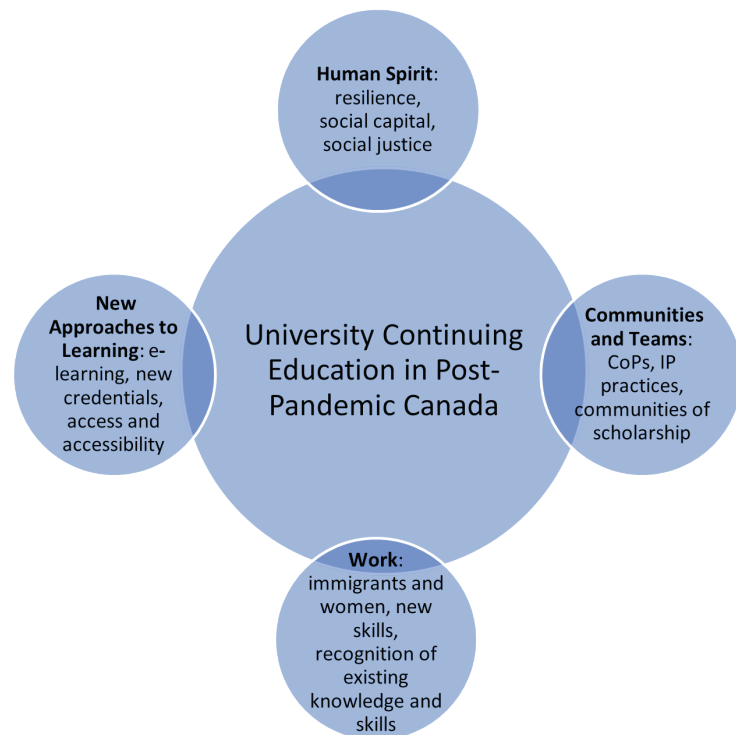


Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for the University Continuing Education Unit in Post-Pandemic Canada

in teaching and learning, but also experiences of discovery, collaboration, innovation, and dissemination such as occurs regularly within the continuing education domain. Supportive institutional culture (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011) and leveraging the power of social networks will be integral to this paradigm shift (Williams et al., 2013).

A Conceptual Framework

Based on the previous review of literature, we propose that in post-pandemic times, university continuing education units will need to make decisions based on the relationships and ideas articulated in the following framework. As Figure 1 indicates, these ideas and relationships involve four domains.

While Figure 1 suggests that post-pandemic continuing education units will need to attend to the domains of the human spirit, communities and teams, work, and new approaches to learning, it does not adequately reflect the cross-connections among the four domains. As an example, in the context of continuing education, successful teams and CoPs are typically resilient and characterized by shared goals of social justice and enablement of work and career opportunities for others. Similarly, if we choose to recognize adults' previous knowledge and skills with new credentials and thereby achieve greater equity in the workplace, we are blending principles and practices from three of the four domains.

In the next section of our paper, we describe what occurred in university continuing education units in Canada in spring, summer, and fall 2020. We then move to a more in-depth snapshot of one unit and reflect on how it navigated and will continue to navigate the days ahead. Connections with the proposed conceptual framework are also considered.

Continuing Education Units in Spring, Summer, and Fall 2020: Some General Insights

In about a one-week period in mid-March 2020, leaders of continuing education units in Canadian post-secondary institutions transitioned their staff to remote working while trying to shift courses and programs to online and virtual methods. In some units, this was a first foray into online learning (learning facilitated within learning management systems) and virtual learning (learning enabled by web-conferencing tools). Instructors who had never taught using distance-based models found themselves overwhelmed by new language, including the terms *synchronous* and *asynchronous*, and new technologies, including Zoom, Webex, and Teams. For continuing education units offering academic courses and programs, there was the pressure of making arrangements so that students could complete their winter terms and not be casualties of this rapid-fire pivot to remote learning.

Not all units made these transitions successfully. Certain courses and programs did not translate easily to alternate delivery formats. It was also necessary to prioritize where time and energy were spent, with academic offerings winning out over not-for-credit and professional development programs. Further, the many health risks associated with COVID-19 meant that programs delivered in local community settings simply had to be halted.

With the passing of spring to summer, exhausted educators found themselves preparing for the fall term. In the case of academically focused units, while energy may have waned among staff and instructors and feedback on spring courses was limited, those with courses to plan carried on, hoping that their mixed levels of expertise would lead to positive experiences for their learners. By comparison, some community-focused and not-for-credit programs found new life since, by the fall, many Canadians had learned that web conferencing and other technology applications can support interaction across geographies and that, while not perfect, they are better than the alternative.

Enrolments in fall 2020 were mixed. Because of the economic and social impacts of the pandemic on the careers and lives of Canadians, some units experienced dramatic increases in registrations. Although this was a positive outcome for these units and points to the importance of adult education in reshaping Canada's economy, it also meant higher workloads for staff and ongoing adjustments for instructors. Adult learners had to make adjustments based on the demands of learning at a distance, while instructors and learners had to navigate serious mental health stressors that sometimes played out in the learning environment.

Contrarily, units in which international language programs are a mainstay were required to re-strategize on various fronts. In Canada, over the last decade, international education and initiatives have played a substantive role in the revenue base of many university continuing education units. However, with the pandemic and its impacts on international education, significant changes and modifications were required.

A Snapshot of One University Continuing Education Unit

Context

The home university of this continuing education unit (hereafter CEU) is located in a culturally diverse city of approximately 520,000 residents. As a mid-sized to larger unit, CEU was founded 90 years ago and focuses primarily on the advancement of people in their careers through academic certificates and diploma programs. The unit also delivers not-for-credit professional development and some corporate training. Because CEU is physically located in a downtown location, it has a history of engagement with the community.

In 2015, CEU determined that online learning would be a pillar in its strategic plan. Although there are indisputable benefits to real-time face-to-face learning for adult learners, life for this learner group is generally distinguished by competing responsibilities and accountabilities (Carter & Carter, 2021). Attending face-to-face classes on prescribed days at specific times can be another stressor.

To advance its mandate in online education, between 2015 and 2019, CEU invested heavily in an in-house educational development team, including media and technology experts and instructional designers. Processes were adapted to ensure that CEU kept up with the requirements of new programs and educational technologies and implemented continuous quality-improvement strategies. Changes were made in assessment strategies such that final exams were eliminated in the vast majority of academic courses.

March 2020 to December 2020

Given the above, when the pandemic hit, CEU was better positioned than many continuing education units across the country and the majority of faculties in its home university. Notably, by winter 2020, approximately 80% of all course enrolments at CEU were in asynchronous online courses.

The pandemic affected CEU in three main ways: the transition of staff to working at home, the transition of all outstanding face-to-face courses and workshops to virtual delivery, and planning for an increase in registrations anticipated for September. Positively, CEU staff transitioned well to working from home, as did the instructors asked to teach virtually with web-conferencing tools for the remainder of the winter term. In short, while workloads were high, the unit fared well.

What could not have been anticipated, despite best efforts to monitor the impact of the pandemic on the economy and workplace trends, were the registrations in fall 2020 and winter 2021. At the time this paper was prepared, course enrolments in CEU's academic programs (certificate and diploma programs) were, on average, 30% higher than targets. Numbers in professional development offerings were similarly high.

Sustaining the unit and integral to its forward momentum is the commitment of staff and instructors to the principles and practices described earlier in the literature review and reflected in the emergent conceptual model. Examples of the unit's engagement with the four domains and specific elements within them are explained below.

Domain 1, Communities and Teams

This domain presented both within and outside of the unit. Internally, staff coalesced in its use of Teams for the exchange of information and problem solving. Townhalls and professional development sessions for instructors occurred more frequently than in previous years so that members of this CoP were apprised of changes, provided professional development, and otherwise supported. Administrative and educational development staff participated in other communities of practice and teams across the university.

As previously noted, before the pandemic, CEU had already made changes to its systems and processes related to e-learning and was, therefore, practising the interprofessional teamwork. This noted, prior to spring 2020, it had not been delivering courses through web conferencing, and rapid modifications were implemented such that real-time face-to-face courses could continue but via Zoom and Webex. While there were bumps, instructors and students were successful overall, and enrolments in virtual course sections continued to be beyond expectation. CEU's internal identity as an interprofessional team and its team-based approach to working with other units and individuals across the campus served it well.

Although time for sharing CEU's work in the scholarship of teaching and learning arena was at a premium, members of the CEU leadership team and other staff members from the educational development team continued to share their discoveries and experiences with others. While work remains such that others in the academy and the scholarship of teaching and learning community itself will value this work, this is an ongoing journey with greater promise than perhaps in days past. In part, this is due to the excellent partnerships that CEU has with the university's teaching and learning institute and the provost's office. Additionally, in general, there is increasing awareness that continuing education units do things differently and, therefore, have a unique role to play in our collective societal advancement. At the same time, continuing education units, including CEU, need to be vocal whenever there is potential to share and celebrate their work.

Domain 2, New Approaches to Learning

The transition to teaching and learning via web conferencing meant a conscious rethinking of traditional conceptualizations of teaching and learning. For instance, three-hour classes over Zoom or Webex were modified and complemented with learning in Brightspace (Desire2Learn) or learning activities occurring off the computer completely. Instructors were encouraged to take their duty-of-care responsibilities (Carter & Carter, 2021) seriously as some of their students were experiencing profound life and mental health needs because of the pandemic. Because CEU's students are part-time learners, they are ineligible for the services available to undergraduate and graduate students. Extra effort was extended by the CEU leadership and program manager teams to discover and disseminate resources to help instructors support distressed students.

An equally important aspect of thinking differently about teaching and learning pertains to the economic and social rehabilitation that Canadians (and others) are now embarked on. Although working through the spring, summer, and fall of 2020 left little energy for thinking about different program models, it was essential to sustain and advance this work. Thus, CEU has continued to do work in the micro-credentialing and workplace-integrated experiential learning spaces in addition to getting the word out about its data and emerging technologies programs. If continuing education units are to be a part of Canada's response to

dire circumstances, they must respond quickly and strategically. They must offer programs aligned with industry needs and explore the practice of alternate digital credentials. CEU is doing its part in relation to each of these areas.

Although CEU has always been committed to access and accessibility standards in the design of its learning resources, it is even more so given the challenging experiences of students and instructors during the pandemic. This same commitment is reflected in the unfolding design decisions for a new website. CEU has likewise been the beneficiary of the university's exceptional leadership in the areas of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Domain 3, Human Spirit

The cultivation of social capital has continued to be part of CEU's mission through online project work with industry facilitated largely through a partnership with a company called Riipen and community partners. Support of instructors so that they can better support students has also been part of the pandemic strategy and will continue into the future of this unit. So too will its advocacy for student supports, particularly as they include mental health and career-related services. Because CEU serves a large number of newcomer Canadians, it is working hard to meet the learning and career needs of this group, which can be somewhat different from those of other adult learners. Likewise, since 60% of students in its academic programs are female and women have been especially affected by the pandemic, there are efforts underway to learn more about how to support female learners.

At CEU, social capital—including resilience, community, and access—is a core element in its academic and not-for-credit programs. It is fostered through instructors' engagement with students and their strong backgrounds in their professional practice areas. Last, social capital is a key element in two no-cost open-access programs called Caregiving Essentials and Infection Prevention and Control for Caregivers and Families. These programs support Canadians as they navigate exceptional life circumstances and health-related challenges at this important time in human history.

Domain 4, Work

As explained earlier, this continuing education unit is defined by its commitment to the educational and career development of adult learners so that, ultimately, they can advance in their careers or be successful in securing a new career. Because the percentage of unemployed learners has recently increased to 24%, the seriousness of this work cannot be underestimated. CEU needs to make informed evidence-based decisions based on market trends so that successful completion of its programs enhances employment opportunities. CEU does this through a research process in which the best available literature is assessed and program advisory groups are consulted.

Further, CEU is active in the space of shorter and micro-based programs and alternate digital credentials based on demonstration of a skill or competency. It is also an active partner with industry, professional associations, and faculties and institutes within its home university. Such progressive approaches to programming and partnerships increase the likelihood of employment of adult learners who study with CEU.

Important Demographics and Possible Implications

Table 1 offers important demographic information about CEU's learners available at the time of this paper.

Thinking About the Future

While every continuing education unit will have its own approaches, we propose that thoughtful integration of the four domains in Figure 1 is likely to lead to greater success for the unit and its learners than other strategies. What is new about the conceptual framework versus others is its emphasis on sustained investment in online technologies and the urgency of recognizing adults' knowledge and skills in ways that permit rapid reentry to the workforce. Complementing this is the need for different kinds of programs than in days past and programs that lead to alternate digital credentials with much practical value. Working together as members of interprofessional teams and communities is an imperative.

While the human spirit and issues of social justice are not new to continuing education practitioners, what seems to be new is how urgently the larger world needs the responsive practices, sense of responsibility to community, and evidence-based decision making that distinguish continuing education. The tumultuous nature of 2020, which included racial riots, displacement of workers, loss of life to COVID-19 in extreme numbers, and crippling changes to how we live, learn, and work, has revealed that the world needs continuing education more than ever.

Accepting that there is some risk to speculating on the future of continuing education units in our country, a few possibilities seem likely. The following five ideas are offered for consideration:

- Online and technology-enabled learning for adult learners is here to stay.
- Compressed, micro-length, and skills- and competency-based programs will be in high demand not only in the short term but also in the longer term as jobs continue to be affected by technological changes we have yet to imagine (LinkedIn, 2020).
- Alternate digital credentials offer a way of making learning visible and valued. In Canada, where immigration is a major variable in what we are today and will be tomorrow, continuing education units can play an important role in making the knowledge and skills of immigrants visible and valued. The same is proposed for women affected by the pandemic as they reenter the workforce.
- Continuing education units will need, in addition to offering the above, to deliver health and socially focused programs that make essential contributions to Canada's challenges in supporting its aging baby boomers.
- Ideally, there will be closer links between the continuing education unit and the university, as the role that continuing education plays in supporting economic development and generating work for Canadians is recognized. Such links hold potential for undergraduate, graduate, and adult students in addition to building brighter futures for Canadians.

In summary, never has the future of continuing education in Canada been more exciting or more daunting. The units that will thrive are those prepared to face unprecedented situations and solve complex problems. They will refine their use of the remote and

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Learners

Student population in academic programs (n = 5,000)	Key patterns	Observations
Gender	Skews female 68%	Trend is likely to increase based on the pandemic's impact on women's careers.
Age	Increase of younger adult learners aged 19–25 from 6% to 12% Principally Gen Y at 66%	Younger adult learners may be recognizing the value of career-oriented learning in combination with degree studies; this subgroup may also be interested in micro skill-based credentials as a way to enhance employment opportunities.
Level of prior education	Post-secondary education 59% Increase in undergraduate learners taking courses (n = 1,200)	Adults with post-secondary education appear to be expressing interest in alternate credentials to complement their prior education and present work lives. Undergraduates are choosing to combine degree studies with career preparation.
Reasons for studying at this time	Career advancement 42%, professional development 18%, new career path 25%, other 15%	Of these reasons, the one showing the greatest increase is new career path; changes in the workplace due to technology and the pandemic may continue to drive this pattern.
Level of employment	Jump in unemployed learners from 17% to 24%	Likely to hold or increase as the impacts of the pandemic continue to be realized.
Top areas of study	Business 44%, health 30%, other 26%	Aligns with academic programming strengths of CEU.
Commitment to study	86% committed to completing a program; up from 75%	Learners seem motivated to secure full credentials.

distributed learning models and educational technologies that 2020 foisted on us, seek strong and innovative partnerships, and develop teams that are nimble, resilient, and caring. This way, Canada will be better positioned to navigate the turbulent times of a post-2020 world with evidence, creativity, and an innovative spirit.

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