

Editorial: Keeping the Flame Alive

Scholarly journals play a pivotal role in the life of any academic field. As key vehicles for creating, communicating and legitimating disciplinary and practical knowledge, they provide opportunities to disseminate research approaches and accomplishments, policy orientations, reflections on practice and emerging trends. Academic 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. How adult education professionals and scholars communicate with each other through their various journals, although necessarily partial and subjective, both reflects and constitutes the field and helps shape its future development.

In Canada, adult education and learning has a long and noble history. Yet, both its academic organisation and its scholarly journal are comparatively new: 30 years for CASAE/ACÉÉA; 25 years for *CJSAE*. So, its journal must take on an added responsibility: introducing and illustrating the Canadian practice of adult education and the practice of Canadian adult educators to a variety of audiences and showcasing such work across Canada and to the rest of the world. This involves more than just merely indicating what currently exists; *CJSAE* also seeks to provide a forum for people to imagine what is possible. It attempts to address the emergent issues affecting Canadian adult education and learning by locating them in a broad yet critical perspective. Like its parent organisation, *CJSAE* attempts to uphold and further this critically-informed tradition whilst also maintaining an avowedly bilingual approach and reflecting the broader concerns of the scholarly association, the diverse interests of fellow Canadian adult educators and the extensive practice of Canadian adult and continuing education.

Only a few of Canada's 70 universities offer academic programs in adult and continuing education and these are located at some distance from one another. This means that the adult education professoriate and student body is relatively small and only rarely can meet and interact. Yet, Canada also hosts a variety of adult education organisations, associations and networks of scholars, policy makers and practitioners that variously promote adult learning and the interests of adult learners, provide forms of adult education to specific sectors of society or promote various facets of adult education and learning. These groups draw upon a rich adult education tradition that (like much of Canadian culture) has developed from its aboriginal and colonial heritages, its proximity to the USA and the successive waves of immigration from countries in Europe, Asia and Central and Southern America. Not surprisingly, Canada has developed a strong reputation for internationalism, not least in adult education where Canadians have played a prominent role in international adult education organisations for many years. Despite such richness, however, these groups are not always aware of each other nor do they find it easy to interact and share approaches and perspectives. So, to acknowledge, accommodate and reflect this diversity and facilitate interaction, CASAE has, since its inception, tried to foster and promote a distinctively Canadian approach to adult education that encompasses these

various academic, professional and practitioner perspectives. This approach was recently summarized as:

A set of unyielding social purposes, informed by passion and outrage, and rooted in a concern for the less-privileged; a systematic and sustained philosophical and critical analysis that develops the abilities to connect immediate, individual experiences with underlying societal structures; and a keen attention to the specific sites, locations, and practices where such purposes and analyses are made real in the lives of Canadians. (Fenwick, Nesbit & Spencer, 2006, p. 17)

This means that *CJSAE* as the only academic adult education journal in Canada must act as an important resource for Canadian adult educators in providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and a vehicle for encouraging diverse groups to feel united in common interest. Not only does the Journal allow for dissemination of the academic work of Canadian adult educators but it also tries to address, in an educational way, the specific issues and challenges that mark Canadian society. *CJSAE*'s editors believe that debate and research about such issues is important but also that challenges to received ideas and dominant approaches are both healthy and necessary. They view the study and practice of adult and continuing education as informed by a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. So for them, the practice of adult education in Canada is not the manifestation of a set of abstract concepts but one part of a broader and vital mission for “really useful knowledge” that helps build and sustain a Canadian movement of adult education committed to creating a more equitable world.

This latest issue of *CJSAE* is no different. It has been specially produced to commemorate 25 years of academic publishing and 30 years of our scholarly association. After an initial call for proposals, the Journal's editors (together with additional help from Michael Welton) selected a variety of manuscripts to showcase the issues, perspectives and voices that have marked the broad diversity of Canadian adult education in the past quarter century. They also sought personal reflections on people's involvement in the scholarly life of Canadian adult education during that time. It's disappointing that none of the proposals they received were either written by women or in French: two aspects that have distinguished *CJSAE* over the past quarter century. However, those manuscripts that were chosen do, collectively, reflect the high academic standards we have come to associate with Canadian scholars. Also, in different ways they capture the spirit and essence of an academic and practitioner organisation that still follows the same progressive and committed orientation as its predecessors and is still led by what one observer approvingly called “populists, community organisers, social gospel idealists and democrats” (Friesen, 1994, p. 174).

This issue contains five articles. To set the stage, two of Canada's adult education elders reflect on CASAE's founding and its subsequent development. First, Michael Welton reflects personally on his own academic life and interests as an adult education professor—virtually co-terminate with that of CASAE—and how he “fell into the company of adult educators.” He explores the various foci his—and CASAE's—work has taken over the years and ends with a call for us to re-imagine CASAE as a space where many different actors can engage in dialogue about creating a just learning society. Next Roger Boshier

returns to the earliest moments of CASAE and, in his inimitable style, reminds us of the tensions and people involved in those bygone days. He explores the sometimes uneasy relationships that can develop between Canadian adult educators and their US counterparts and reiterates the need for more joint activity and mutual understanding.

The focus next shifts onto *CJSAE* itself and considers the various articles it has published and approaches it has followed over the years. Ralf St. Clair explores and analyses the Journal's publication history since its inception. He details what has been published, who wrote it and what it was about, describes the experiences and perspectives of various past editors, and examines the role of the Journal in contributing to the discipline of adult education in Canada. Overall, he finds that *CJSAE* has been shaped by different layers of expectation and influence and particularly by the three prevailing tensions: Canada vs. USA, west vs. east and Anglophone vs. Francophone. The following articles explore two of the major foci of Canadian scholarly work during the past 25 years: adult literacy and workplace learning. First, Maurice Taylor, Allan Quigley, Gillian Kajganich and Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier consider the evolution of adult literacy research and the development of the contemporary knowledge base. They present seven metaphors to depict the current state of literacy scholarship and describe the various interests of academic researchers, practitioners and government sponsors as three solitudes that must be addressed if the field of adult literacy research is to develop and the needs of literacy learners are to be met. Finally, Bruce Spencer and Dan Cui examine the contributions of Canadian scholars to mapping and understanding the complex and inter-related issues of work and learning. They find an increase in such scholarship in recent years but also that, significantly, Canadian scholars have neither abandoned adult education discourses nor bought into the dominant neo-liberal approaches. Instead, they are still promoting a range of radical and counter-hegemonic approaches that draw upon a wide variety of perspectives,

Of course, there are other issues that are as important and have also formed a major feature of the Journal articles. Especially notable has been the advance of women's and feminist perspectives on adult education—in which Canadian scholars have been at the forefront of worldwide developments. The Editors were keen to include articles on such developments but despite several attempts to solicit manuscripts, they were ultimately unsuccessful. However, the topic has not been missing from the Journal's pages; we refer interested readers to the recent comprehensive review of gender and learning by Leona English and Catherine Irving that *CJSAE* published in 2007. As usual we conclude with a selection of reviews of recent books: on the revolutionary intellect of Karl Marx, citizenship as politics, indigenous research methods, and the work and life of John Ohliger.

With this issue, the term of the current Editorial Board is concluded. During our tenure we have striven to repair the damaged reputation and raise the profile of the Journal throughout Canada and internationally. We have ensured that the Journal comes out regularly and that correspondence from authors, reviewers and publishers is acknowledged and responded to in a timely manner but also that the manuscripts we publish reflect the highest standards of adult education scholarship. We have increased the number of manuscript submissions and maintained a diverse approach by continuing to publish personal reflections and non-research based articles in our *Perspectives* section. We have continued to publish the names and thesis titles of those who have earned graduate

degrees in adult education and cognate subjects from Canadian universities each year. In addition, we also made some innovations: using a commercial publisher for printing and distribution, reviewing and updating our list of consulting editors, preparing an editorial to introduce each Journal issue, including a student representative on the Editorial Board and deliberately increasing the number of book reviews written by students, initiating a “Meet the Editors” session at the annual CASAE conference, promoting the adult & continuing education journals of other countries (particularly those with a small readership or that are not so well-known), and developing and coordinating presentations of two international panels of journal editors at recent adult education conferences (Nesbit et al., 2007, 2009).

Of course, while the Editor-in-Chief holds the ultimate responsibility, I know how much of the real work has been done by so many CASAE members and supporters. *CJSAE*'s academic excellence and reputation relies significantly upon the efforts and commitment of many people. On behalf of my Editorial Board colleagues—Jacqueline Ashby, Darlene Clover, Shibao Guo, Ian Hunt and Katherine McManus, and former Board members Shauna Butterwick and Budd Hall—I would like to acknowledge all those who have worked so tirelessly to deal with the myriad aspects of the manuscript review and production processes over the past four years. Former editors of both *CJSAE* and *Adult Education Quarterly* and the staff at the University of Calgary Press have been generous with their time and advice. Deserving of especial thanks is my SFU colleague and *CJSAE*'s editorial assistant Katarina McKenzie who has kept everyone firmly on track and maintained the records and correspondence essential for the Journal's smooth operation. It has been an enjoyable, rewarding and stimulating four years as Editor and I'm delighted that we've been able not only to maintain the Journal in its existing form but also see it prosper. Finally, I am reassured that *CJSAE* is entering its second 25 years in the capable hands of Donovan Plumb and a new editorial team. My very best wishes for its continued success. CASAE and Canadian adult education deserves nothing less.

Tom Nesbit

Editor-in Chief

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