

Editorial:

Small, Medium, Large: Grappling with Levels of Scale in Adult Education

Welcome, everyone, to our first online-only edition of the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education/La Revue Canadienne Pour L'étude de l'éducation des adultes (CJSAE/RCÉÉA)*. For those of you new to our journal, the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) has sponsored a print version of *CJSAE/RCÉÉA* since 1984. Last fall, CASAE issued the journal in both print and online format. From this point onward, the journal will appear only online.

This change promises several advantages. Perhaps most important, going online makes the journal far more accessible than it was in its paper format. All of the articles in our publication will be searchable using Google, now documented to be the search engine preferred by close to 80% of scholars. Readers will be able to use the Internet to access high-quality, easy-to-read, printable PDF versions of articles and reviews. This is indeed an important change. Scholars contemplating publication will perceive *CJSAE/RCÉÉA*, with its excellent scholarly reputation and now its wide availability, as a premier journal to which to submit manuscripts. Articles appearing in the journal will be more widely read and more frequently referenced. Scholars publishing in the journal can anticipate having more influence on the field. This, in turn, will provide opportunities for adult education scholars, especially our Canadian contributors, to share ideas, initiatives and research findings with scholars from around the world.

The system we are using—Open Journal Systems (OJS)—has already proven to be an excellent means for managing the operations of the journal. Over the past several months, several people have submitted manuscripts that have been successfully and efficiently reviewed and published. As time goes on and as we work out the final bugs in the submission, review and publication process, authors can expect speedy and effective processing of their manuscripts. Authors and reviewers are finding OJS to be very user friendly. The efficiency of the system is enabling the editorial team to focus on what is most important: the selection and publication of articles with the most potential to enhance the theories and practices of adult education, continuing education and lifelong learning.

A few years ago, online publications were perceived to be less reputable than those that were paper-based. This is no longer the case. Most of the world's most prestigious journals maintain a strong online presence. Many journals now appear only online. Consumers are increasingly recognizing that the quality of a journal hinges less on its format than on the rigour of the process by which manuscripts are accepted for publication. In the case of our journal, our very fine network of scholarly reviewers ensures that the manuscript review process is the very best. This, I think, is patently obvious in the quality of the four articles contained in the current issue.

In his review in this issue of the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, 2010 Edition*, Kjell Rubenson comments that systematic research in adult education is “formidable in a field with no clear boundaries.” In my mind, one of the things that makes adult education research so “formidable” is that the practices of adult education span many levels of scale, from the smallest of interactions between individuals (or even the thought

processes of a single person), through the more complex encounters of people in communities of practice, right up to the far-flung transactions of global systems and populations. Adult education cannot be rightly understood by focusing exclusively or even preferentially at any one scale. Rather, insights into adult education practices require attention to small-scale processes, mid-level interactions and large-scale transactions, oftentimes all at once. Understanding adult education requires attending to the ways phenomena at one scale both influence and are influenced by (but rarely determine) phenomena at other scales.

This is indeed difficult work. It requires resisting the temptation to be either reductionistic or over-generalizing. It demands viewing reality not as something objective outside us but as something in the process of becoming that includes us. It necessitates an enhanced political sense of adult education as a force that matters in the world, a field of practice with powers and potentials to foster positive and transformative social change (or, as has so often happened, to perpetuate oppressive social relations).

I was delighted to observe how all four articles featured in this issue acknowledge and grapple in sophisticated ways with the complex scalar relations of adult education. Laura Lane and Nancy Taber's article, for example, draws richly on the theoretical constructions of Pierre Bourdieu to investigate the ways cultural capital structures the experiences of first-generation women in university. Lane and Taber explore the life histories of a small number of young women in an effort to reveal the detailed ways cultural capital variously enables and constrains the lives of women in higher education contexts.

In their article, Andreea Cervatiuc and Thomas Ricento explore the workings of "hidden curriculum" in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. Interviews and in-class observations of instructors in a Calgary-based LINC program revealed that the curriculum meta-orientation (the broad perspective held by instructors on the purpose and preferred method of ESL instruction) tended to reproduce dominant cultural ideology and power structures. Better training of ESL instructors, the authors argue, that helps them become aware of their embeddedness in social and cultural power structures might help reduce the negative effects of the hidden curriculum for newcomers to Canada.

Patricia Gouthro's article exemplifies how the rich literature of learning organizations can illuminate the ways grassroots, community-based organizations support the learning of their members. Gouthro conducts an intriguing case study of a women's crime writers' organization, Sisters in Crime. She argues that it is useful to conceptualize an organization like Sisters in Crime as a learning organization, but suggests that its capacity to support the learning of its members is directly linked to its social justice orientation.

In their interesting article, Mary Alfred and Shibao Guo explore adult education through a much broader field of view. A review of 16 years of papers from the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and CASAE conference reveals that the field of adult education in North America is paying insufficient attention to issues related to globalization. Their survey of graduate adult education programs in Canada and the United States reveals that globalization is not central enough in the training of adult education graduate students. Alfred and Guo suggest that a renewed focus on internationalization is

needed to prepare adult education graduate students to address the dramatic implications of globalization.

All of the papers in this issue (and many of the book reviews) grapple with interactions across levels of scale that are ubiquitous in the field of adult education. All attempt to understand more clearly the ways small processes (like individual learning) shape and are shaped by processes transpiring at ever larger levels of scale, right up to the very largest transactions of globalization. With great political astuteness, all of the papers aim to understand more clearly the entwinement of adult education in power relations of different levels of scale in the production and reproduction of personalities, communities, organizations and societies.

In doing so, all contribute to the depth of scholarship that is developing in our field. If the papers of this volume are any indication, the future of the journal really does look bright! In the coming months, I look forward to seeing more fine examples of scholarly work that can become part of the growing legacy of this fine publication.

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