

Editorial: Staying the Course

The recent decision of the federal government to cut funding for the Canadian Council on Learning is both regrettable and shortsighted. There are too few avenues in Canada for the national promotion of adult education and lifelong learning and, in its few short years, the CCL has provided a regular stream of essential information about various aspects of our educational systems and learning abilities. However regrettable the decision though, adult educators should not be too surprised. The cuts to CCL are just one part of a larger pattern of an ideologically-based attack on those organisations that seek to help and empower the marginalized or less privileged members of society. In recent years, the Conservative government has either axed or slashed funding for the Status of Women Canada, the Canadian Council of Social Development, the Court Challenges Program, the Canadian Policy Research Networks, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Volunteer Canada, the Canadian Health Network, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, and Family Services Canada among many others.

Ironically, slashing support for the Canadian Council on Learning, which was leading a push for national standards for post-secondary education, comes at a time when our American neighbours are doing exactly the opposite. Like Canada, the USA does not have a national education strategy. However, the Obama administration is launching a massive \$250 million education initiative, claiming education is key to America's future prosperity. There, the American Council on Learning—the sister organization to the CCL and the major coordinating body for all of the country's higher education institutions—is developing strategies to increase educational access for non-traditional learners and helping shape public policy on issues of importance to adult learners and the post-secondary institutions they study in.

Thankfully, our Journal remains untouched by government funding and can retain its role as a key vehicle for the promotion of adult education and a place to discuss and critique such approaches. The current issue contains four articles that typify the broad approaches to adult education that we in Canada enjoy. First, Maria Adamuti-Trache and Robert Sweet explore the educational participation of recent immigrants who seek to improve their career opportunities. In addition to discussing the more generally-identified factors, they also show how participation levels are significantly affected by personal and situational features of the immigration process. Next, Catherine McGregor and Jason Price explore how websites can become tools for civic advocacy. Using the web-based tools and approaches of two national literacy organizations as examples, they consider how civic agency and advocacy are constructed, represented, and mediated. McGregor and Price show how particular online engagement strategies might advance the advocacy and policy work of such organizations and then, extending their analysis beyond the local, explore how knowledge dissemination and civic participation might be further enhanced. Next, Roger Boshier continues his analysis and critique of dominant approaches to safety training for mariners. Insistent that "training has little to do with learning", he suggests that less authoritarian and more participatory, engaging and respectful ways of fostering learning might be more appropriate and beneficial to learners while also reducing the number of nautical accidents.

Finally, Patti Dickieson and Lorraine Carter consider nursing education and examine a particular assessment activity—scenario testing—that they claim enhances students' critical and integrative thinking as well as personal confidence. Although many university-based programs appear to have never considered approaches to education and learning that adult educators take for granted, Dickieson and Carter thankfully ground their discussion firmly in several common adult educational theoretical principles.

We also include four reviews of books by Canadian adult educators: Donna Chovanec's *Between Hope and Despair: Women Learning Politics; The Arts and Social Justice: Re-crafting Adult Education and Community Cultural Leadership* by Darlene Clover and Joyce Stalker; Parin Dossa's *Politics and Poetics of Migration: Narratives of Iranian Women from the Diaspora* and Jo-Anne Willment's *Learners in Midlife: Graduate Education and Workplaces in Canada*. In different ways, each of these books discusses the role of adult education in social movements and shows how greater participation can dramatically change peoples' lives. So, even though Canada's federal government might try to limit the reach of adult education and weaken its ability to raise political consciousness, we can rest assured that the commitment of our adult educators to furthering participation and challenging unfairness and oppression is not diminishing.

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