

Editorial

The Great Diversity of our Research and Practice

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A year ago, we put out a call for submissions for a theme issue on lifelong learning and aging, in the belief that active learning for maintaining and enhancing mental capacity as we age was of much interest to gerontologists, geriatricians, policy-makers in health care and government, and, based on our consultations, some adult educators. We received one paper shortly after the call, a portent of a virtual torrent of submissions, we thought. Alas, despite repeated calls, cajoling, and attempts to invoke a “guilt trip” among our colleagues both within continuing education and in other fields, the paper by Atlanta Sloane-Seale and Bill Kops, which is published in this issue, remained the sole submission.

Perhaps we were ahead of our time with the call, perhaps folks were just too busy, or perhaps other phenomena (e.g., university-community engagement) had captured their attention. Thank you, Atlanta and Bill, and perhaps another time there will be a sufficient number of papers for a theme issue on lifelong learning and aging.

These comments were written by Dennis Foth, who was to have been the guest editor for this issue because of his expertise in the field of education for older adults. I am taking his last sentence as a promise to guest edit a future issue on this theme.

Now we come to the contents of the current issue. In contrast to what we had planned—a convergence of our focus on a single theme—the present issue is filled with articles addressing several very different topics drawn from the great diversity of the subfields that make up university continuing education. However, as Dennis noted, we did receive one submission related to the announced theme of this issue. Atlanta Sloane-Seale and Bill Kops have added to their already well-established reputations for expertise in this subfield with their article “Older Adults in Lifelong Learning:

Participation and Successful Aging.” This article relates directly to one of the ways in which this theme was described in the Call for Papers that appeared in *CJUCE* 33(1), that is, how continuing education units can help to develop and preserve the cognitive capacity of older adults. The authors discuss how several disciplines relate to this issue and then offer a framework for thinking about the participation of older adults in educational activities as it relates to successful aging.

In their article “Teaching Philosophy: Moving from Face-to-Face to Online Classrooms,” Faye Wiesenbergh and Elizabeth Stacey address another topic that is steadily increasing in importance as many educational institutions put more of their offerings online. This transition is often looked at from the point of view of the student or from that of the administrator at a conventional institution who is trying to decide whether or to what extent to put courses and programs online. Wiesenbergh and Stacey’s article focuses, instead, on another very significant player in any transition from face-to-face to online programming, namely, the instructor. Their data were drawn from instructors who teach both face-to-face and online at dual-mode institutions in Canada and Australia. Their conclusions will be of interest to instructors and program administrators, as well as to those who offer professional-development support to teachers making this transition.

The subtitle of Irene Karpiak’s contribution to this issue speaks volumes. “*The Weir: Storytelling that Transforms*” describes how adult educators can use the ancient art of storytelling to overcome resistance and barriers that might inhibit learning in the absence of the opportunity to tell our own stories and listen to the stories of our co-learners.

Yadollah Mehralizadeh, Ebrahim Salehi, and Sid Mansur Marashi consider yet another important aspect of our practice in their article “Higher Education and the Debate on Key/Generic Skills.” The authors situate their examination of how and where participants in the economy acquire the key, or generic, skills they require for such participation within a discussion of the nature of work in the modern economy and how that work is structured. Although the authors are from institutions in Iran, their discussion is a very broad examination of this issue, an issue with which institutions of adult and higher education around the world currently struggle.

The purpose of the Forum section of *CJUCE* is to provide different perspectives on critical issues, policies, and contemporary events. The two Forum items in this issue are responses to Scott McLean’s Fall 2007 Forum piece, “About Us: Expressing the Purpose of University Continuing Education in Canada.” McLean ended his contribution with two questions for practitioners of university continuing education to think about and perhaps respond to. First, in the context of the publicly expressed purposes of our units, “... is there a chance that managing public relations or generating

financial surpluses [for our parent institutions] are alternative priorities that could put at risk the expressed purposes of continuing education units?" (p. 79). Second, do our units fail to address educational inequalities in our society, instead, "... provid[ing] additional opportunities for the already well educated to build their expertise and credentials, in effect, further distancing them from those who did not have the privilege of attending university in the first place?" (p. 79).

Lois Gander, in her Forum article "About Us: Reflection and Dialogue on the Purpose of University Continuing Education in Canada," takes up McLean's challenge by pointing out that some important activities of our units may not feature large in the public statements of purpose that McLean examined during his research. Gander raises some interesting points about the apparent discrepancies between what we say we do and what we actually do and ends her piece with another challenging question: "[W]hat *ought* we to be doing in university continuing education?"

Tom Nesbit also responded to McLean's article, in a Forum contribution entitled "Don't Mourn, Organize: A Response to Scott McLean." Nesbit sketches a number of "ways forward" that we might consider and notes that one of his purposes in responding to McLean is to engage in self-reflection and encourage further debate. I hope that his contribution and that of Gander will do just that: encourage you to reflect on and continue this debate, perhaps by writing down your thoughts and submitting them for publication in the Forum section of this journal.

I know that you will find the articles, Forum pieces, and book reviews in this issue stimulating. However, before you settle down to read them, please cast a glance over the Call for Papers on page 6 (following the table of contents). It is for a theme issue of this journal to be published a year from now, in Spring 2009. The theme will be university-community engagement, which is also the theme of the CAUCE 2008 conference. I look forward to receiving your submissions.

Walter Archer