A Profile of University Continuing Educators in Canada

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Abstract

As the field of adult and continuing education matures, it is useful to more fully understand both the nature of practice and the characteristics of practitioners. Although some attention has been devoted to these topics in the literature, this article focuses on those practitioners who work in a university setting. and reports the results of a national study of university continuing educators. The data, which was gathered on a

Résumé

Au fur et à mesure que les domaines d'éducation permanente et d'éducation aux adultes se développent, il est utile de mieux comprendre leur nature ainsi que les caractéristiques des personnes s'y intéressant. Bien qu'il y ait eu de l'attention consacrée à ces sujets dans la littérature, cet article insiste sur les personnes intéressées travaillant dans un milieu universitaire ainsi que sur le rapportage des résultats d'une

Canada-wide basis, has allowed us to both describe the characteristics and job responsibilities of those working in the field and develop job responsibility profiles. In addition, the study considers questions of gender, academic rank, age, educational levels, and length of experience in university continuing education as important elements in understanding who continuing educators are, and the kind of work they do.

étude national sur les formateurs universitaires en éducation permanente. Les données, cueillies à l'échelle du Canada, nous ont permis de faire la description des caractéristiques et des responsabilités inhérentes aux postes de ceux oeuvrant dans le domaine et de développer les profils des responsabilités inhérentes à ces emplois. Afin de mieux comprendre qui sont les formateurs en éducation permanente ainsi que le genre de travail qu'ils font, l'étude entre en ligne de compte des éléments importants tels que les questions de genre, rang professorale, âge, niveau d'instruction, et la durée de l'expérience en éducation permanente universitaire.

Introduction

Although continuing education has a long history in Canadian universities, little is known about who continuing educators are or the nature of their work. The characteristics of continuing education practitioners have received little direct study, and the available information (for example, age, experience, gender, or education) is generally contained in studies focusing on other aspects of continuing education (Egan & Weaver-Paquette, 1994; Hein, 1992; Lawler and Fielder, 1993; Parker, 1994; Pearce, 1992a; Springfield & Hoffman, 1984). These studies reveal few consistencies from group to group with the exception of age; with the majority of continuing educators are being older (over 45 years of age).

Somewhat more work has been done in the area of defining continuing education practice. Some descriptions have been drawn from the authors' experiences or extrapolated from management literature (Freedman, 1987; Knox, 1982; Strother & Klus, 1982; White & Belt, 1980;). Some of the tasks,

job priorities, and work preferences of continuing educators have been discussed (Brue, 1990; Donaldson, 1993; Griggs & Morgan, 1988; Parker, 1994; Pearce, 1992b; Springfield & Hoffman, 1984); lists of proficiencies have been developed (Knox, 1987; National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) 1988, 1989); and the roles and responsibilities of some continuing educators have been discussed or delineated (Cookson & English, 1997; Donaldson, 1990; Donaldson & Kuhne, 1994; English, 1992; Hein, 1992, 1993b; Pearce, 1995).

The purpose of the present study, then, was to move from the smaller studies that have focused on particular geographic regions or specific continuing education jobs towards describing, at a national level, the characteristics and responsibilities of Canadian continuing educators.

Method

A survey questionnaire was developed, pilot-tested, and distributed to all 53 English-speaking member universities of the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE). The questionnaires were sent in bulk to the head of the continuing education unit at each university with the request that they be distributed to the professional continuing education staff members in their unit. Responses were received from 37 institutions and 179 individuals.

Although the institutional response rate was high (70 percent), it is difficult to ascertain the individual response rate since membership in CAUCE is institutional in nature. There is no accurate listing of individual university continuing educators; however, the CAUCE handbook (1995) gives names and institutional addresses of approximately 610 individuals from English-speaking universities. Approximately 70 of these are not involved in continuing education practice (e.g., office managers, student representatives, secretaries, and academics studying the field of adult education). We estimate, then, that there was a possible population of 540, giving an estimated individual response rate of 33 percent. Although this is somewhat lower than we had hoped, in almost all cases individual responses from each institution tended to cover a range of continuing education positions and functions (e.g., Deans, Assistant Deans, Programmers, etc.). So, even though the response rate limits some of the generalizability and conclusions, the data and findings are still valuable in providing a picture of continuing education in Canada.

Findings

The findings of the study focus on two areas—who continuing educators are and what kind of work they do. This simple dichotomy allowed us to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents in answer to the first question and to concentrate on their work in continuing education in response to the second.

The demographic data include descriptions of continuing educators: their age, level of education, academic rank, and amount of university continuing education experience. In discussing what continuing educators do, we look at the job titles they hold, describe their responsibilities, develop descriptive profiles for several job categories, and note the various combinations of education and experience that are important for continuing educators.

In addition to the two general areas that describe continuing educators and discuss the nature of their work, there is a third area that warrants special attention. We have chosen to present our findings in relation to gender issues separately, rather than include them with the demographic data, since the results are of an integrative nature and reflect a range of issues that cut across the other categories.

Who Are University Continuing Educators?

Age

Continuing educators tend to be clustered towards the "older" end of the age spectrum—with the majority (55 percent) being 45 or older. To put this figure in perspective, we compared the ages of our respondents to both the Canadian labour force and the major workforce in universities, that is, faculty members. As Figure 1 shows, both continuing educators and university faculty members (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1996) are generally older than the age of Canada's labour force (Statistics Canada, 1994).

There may be several explanations for the fact that university staff reflect a group that is, general, "older." Universities across Canada experienced significant growth during the 1960s and 70s, resulting in an influx of new, and generally younger, faculty. This influx skewed the age of faculty and, in the current climate of limited university growth, has resulted in a "graying"

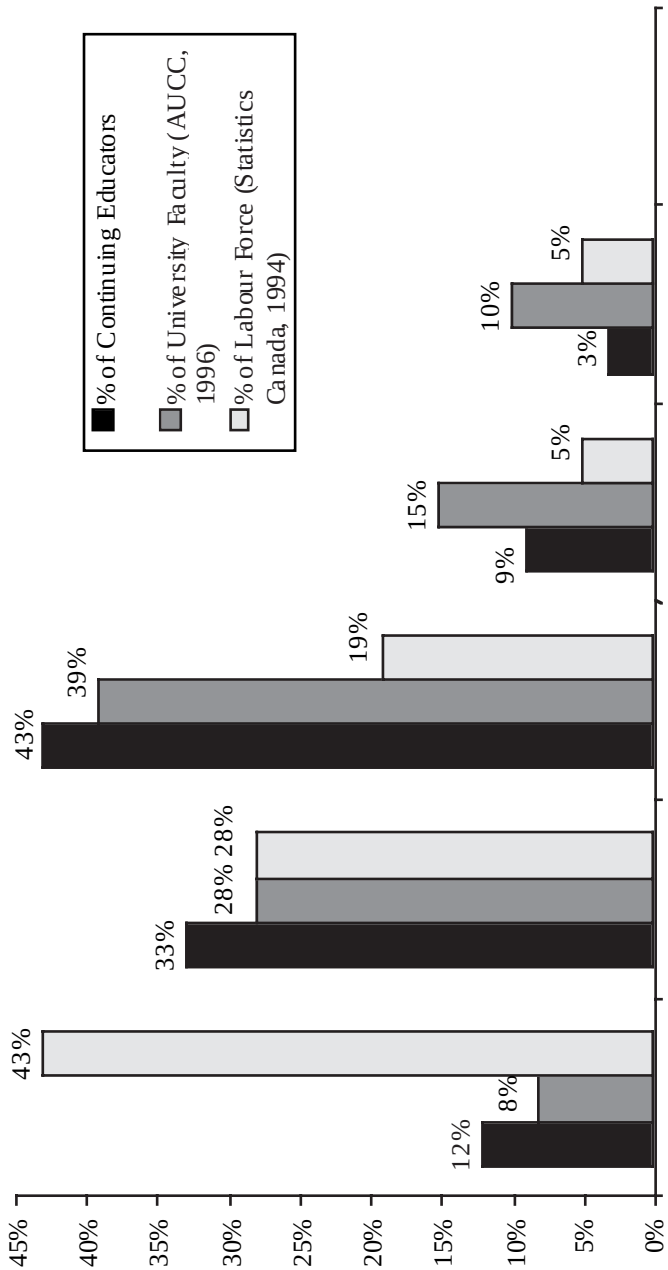


Figure 1.
Ages of Continuing Educators Compared to University Faculty and the Canadian Labour Force

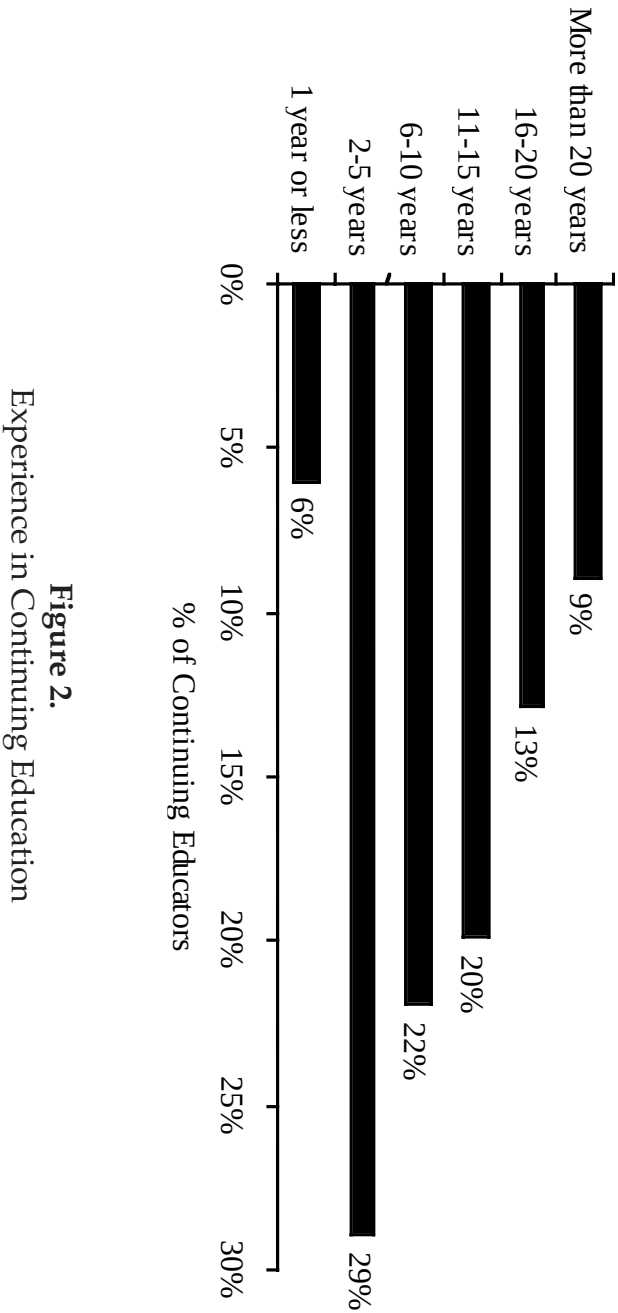


Figure 2.
Experience in Continuing Education

of the university (AUCC, 1996). The data show us that nationally, university faculty are generally older than continuing educators (who tend to be middle-aged), who in turn are older than the general labour force.

Experience

The length of experience in continuing education reported by respondents (see Figure 2) shows a considerable range of experience.

Given the overall lack of growth in employment in the university sector, the results also show that there are a surprising number of newcomers to the profession. More than one-third (35 percent) of respondents had been in the field for five years or less.

Education

Overall, continuing educators were a well-educated group: 74 percent had a master's degree and 40 percent had a doctorate or were working on one. Thirteen percent of the respondents with master's degrees and 29 percent of those with a doctorate had specialised in adult or continuing education. Interestingly, 23 percent of those with a doctorate in another area had also included course work in adult education in their programs. Most people with doctorates had Ph.D.s (77 percent); other designations included Ed.D., D.Ed., and D.B.A.

In all, 25 percent of respondents had completed a doctoral degree, and 15 percent had begun a doctoral program. The earliest doctoral degree held by respondents was received in 1959. The mean age when doctoral study was begun was 34 years, which is somewhat older than the average doctoral student (Sheridan & Pike, 1994). However, the average length of time for completing the degree was only 4 years, compared to the 5.6 years for students in education and the social sciences reported by Yeates (1991).

The universities from which respondents had received their doctoral degrees included those in Canada, the United States, and Europe. Almost half (49 percent) studied at Canadian universities, while 40 percent attended schools in the United States. In total, 34 universities were represented: 12 in Canada, 17 in the U.S; and 5 in Europe. The universities with the highest number of graduates in this study were the University of British Columbia with 6, the University of Alberta with 5, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education with 4, and the University of Toronto and

the University of Wisconsin with 3 each.

Academic Rank

Of our respondents, 42 percent (71) held academic rank as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Continuing Educators with Academic Rank Compared with Canadian University Faculty.

Academic Rank	% Continuing Educators (n=71)	% University Faculty (AUCC, 1996)
Professor	21	40
Associate Professor	24	35
Assistant Professor	17	21
Lecturer/Instructor	18	-
Extension Specialist	9	-
Other	11	4

Seventy-eight percent of all respondents indicated they were in tenurable positions, and of these, 32 percent had tenure. However, this result is an anomaly, since only those with academic rank are eligible for tenure in Canadian universities. The term "tenure" may have been misunderstood by some respondents and taken to mean that they had permanent, non-contractual positions in which their probationary period had been completed.

Continuing education is one of the few areas within universities where similar responsibilities can be held by those with academic rank and by those without it. For example, we found that program planning was a responsibility for 38 percent of those with academic rank and for 63 percent of those without academic rank. Somewhat surprisingly, none of the job responsibilities that were reported (and which are discussed later) were found to be exclusive to those with (or without) academic rank. All of the job responsibilities reported (including support-staff functions) were

carried out by both groups.

What Do Continuing Educators Do?

The data that describe the work done by continuing educators consist of the job titles they reported as well as the responsibilities of their various positions. In addition, the data allowed us to develop some initial descriptive profiles of several continuing education positions, along with a discussion of respondents' beliefs about the amount of experience and type of education necessary for these various positions.

Job Titles

Unlike academic rank, which is reasonably comparable across universities, the titles given to continuing education positions vary considerably among institutions. In order to discover the range of job titles held by continuing educators across Canada, respondents were asked to write in their job title. We were able to distinguish 10 categories of job titles, as shown in Table 2.

The titles of Dean or Director and Associate or Assistant Dean or Director are self–explanatory. The job title of Program Head or Chair also included the head of a unit. The next classification, Program Co-ordinator, Program Director, or Specialist also included people with the title of Regional Officer, and Research and Development Co-ordinator. Student Affairs and Marketing also included Counsellors.

Responsibilities

People were not only asked to specify the title of their job, but also to describe their job responsibilities. These descriptions were analysed using content analysis techniques and resulted in the 11 categories of job responsibilities shown in Table 3. Most of the responsibilities are self-explanatory, but a few need explanation. Program planning and administration, the most frequently reported area of responsibility, included such tasks as budgeting, marketing, promotion, and evaluation, among others. Managing a sub-unit included responsibility for the staff and budget of a sub-unit; student services included advising, admissions, student advocacy, and career counselling. The fact that the majority of respondents reported responsibilities in more than one category serves to demonstrate the wide range of functions in most continuing education positions.

Of all the responsibilities, program planning and administration was mentioned the most often. In fact, it was reported by 65 percent (113 of 173)

Table 2.
Job Titles Reported by Continuing Educators.

Job Title	%
Dean/Director	13
Associate/Assistant Dean Or Director	6
Program/Head Chair	15
Program Co-Ordinator/Director/Specialist	49
Program Assistant	4
Student Affairs/Marketing	7
Professor	2
Instructor/Teacher	1
Instructional Design/Teaching Development	2
Support Staff	1

Table 3.
Reported Job Responsibilities.

Job Responsibility	Frequency of Occurrence
Program Planning & Administration	113
Managing a sub-unit	28
Research	22
Dean or Equivalent	21
Teaching	14
Distance Education	13
Student Services	10
Support Staff Duties	6
Marketing	5
Instructional Design	4
Financial	3
Total (from 173 respondents)	239

of respondents. and provides support for what is already well known by practitioners—that programming is the largest task undertaken by continuing education units. In addition, as noted earlier, there was no difference in the range of distribution of job responsibilities on the basis of whether respondents held academic rank or not, that is, having a faculty position did not relate to the types of major job responsibilities that were reported.

There were some interesting results achieved by comparing job responsibilities with job titles. Program planning and administration, for example, was a responsibility that was carried out not only by Programmers, but by almost every other position—with the exception of Support Staff and Teachers. Table 3 shows that the next most frequent task was managing a sub-unit, followed by research and then Dean's tasks.

The fact that research was third on the list of job responsibilities is somewhat surprising, since both anecdotal reports and other studies (Donaldson, 1993; Hein, 1992; Pearce, 1992b;) point out that doing research is not a highly valued activity in university continuing education units. One explanation may be that respondents equated a number of programming activities (such as needs assessments or program evaluations) with research. In addition, many respondents with academic rank likely had "research" as a job requirement and have therefore reported it, even though it may not be valued in their unit.

Descriptive Profiles

Drawing together the findings of this study for each job category allowed us to develop the following descriptive profiles of university continuing educators. Although looking at averages masks peculiarities, it does provide a picture of the typical person in these positions—typification is used here as a heuristic device to simplify, but not over-simplify, the data.

Deans/Directors (n=25)

About half the Deans/Directors held academic rank, and of those with academic rank, 25 percent were Professors and 25 percent were Associate Professors. About half (9) of the 20 who were tenurable had tenure. Thirty-nine percent of Deans had doctoral degrees, while 17 percent reported being in a doctoral program. Women accounted for 52 percent of Deans. As shown in Table 5, more than half the Deans (52 percent) were in the 40–50 year old

age group. In terms of their accumulated continuing education experience (Table 4), the largest group (35 percent) had 6–10 years of experience.

Table 4.
Deans/Directors' Experience in Continuing Education.

Years	% (n=25)
1 or less	-
2–5	17
6–10	35
11–15	22
16–20	9
20 +	17

Table 5.
Age of Deans/ Directors.

Age	% (n=25)
29 or less	-
30–39	13
40–49	52
50–59	35
60 +	-

All respondents reported being fully engaged in responsibilities directly related to the Dean's role. In addition, program planning, distance education, teaching, and research were each reported by one individual.

From this data, then, one description of a Dean might be as follows: a woman, 45 years old, who has worked in continuing education for eight years. She has a doctorate and holds the academic rank of Associate Professor.

Assistant/Associate Deans/Directors (n=17)

Fewer than one-third of Assistant/Associate Deans or Directors held academic rank, but of those who did, 40 percent were Professors, 20 percent Associate Professors, and 40 percent Assistant Professors. Half of those who were eligible for tenure (8) had achieved it. Twenty-seven percent of

respondents had doctorates, and an equal number were working on one. Program planning/administration (41 percent) and management of a unit (35 percent) were the two functions most often reported by this group. Overall, they had less experience in continuing education than Deans, with 36 percent reporting less than 6 years experience (see Table 6), and the largest group (50 percent) was between 40 and 50 years old (see Table 7). Seventy-three percent of Assistant/Associate Deans or Directors were women.

Table 6.
Assistant Deans/ Directors Experience in Continuing Education.

Years	% (n=17)
1 or less	10
2–5	27
6–10	27
11–15	18
16–20	18
20 +	-

Table 7.
Age of Assistant Deans/Directors.

Age	% (n=17)
29 or less	-
30–39	40
40–49	50
50–59	10
60 +	-

From this data, a description of an Assistant Dean/Director might be as follows: a woman, 45 years old, who is currently pursuing a doctorate. She

does not hold academic rank or tenure, but has six years of experience in continuing education. She spends most of her time in program planning and administration, followed by the business of managing a unit.

Program Head/Chair (n=17)

Seventy-six percent of this group held academic rank: 23 percent were Professors, 31 per cent Associate Professors, 8 percent Assistant Professors, and 39 percent Lecturers/Instructors. All of them were in tenurable positions, and 10 held tenure. Almost one-third (31 percent) had doctorates, and 15 percent had partially completed one. Their experience in continuing education (see Table 8) showed a bipolar distribution with 42 percent having more than ten years experience and 50 percent having five years or less. No one in this group was under 35, about one-third were in the 40-50 year age range, and half were over 50 (see Table 9). Women represented just over half (58 percent) of this group.

Table 8.
Program Head/Chair Experience in Continuing Education.

Years	% (n=17)
1 or less	14
2–5	36
6–10	7
11–15	14
16–20	21
20 +	8

Table 9.
Age of Program Head/Chair.

Age	% (n=17)
29 or less	-
30–39	15
40–49	35

50–59	38
60 +	12

Program Heads/Program Chairs reported the widest range of job responsibilities, as shown in Figure 3. Almost one-third of this group (31 percent) reported program planning and administration as a responsibility, and a third (35 per cent) reported management of a unit; only 14 percent of respondents mentioned research as a responsibility.

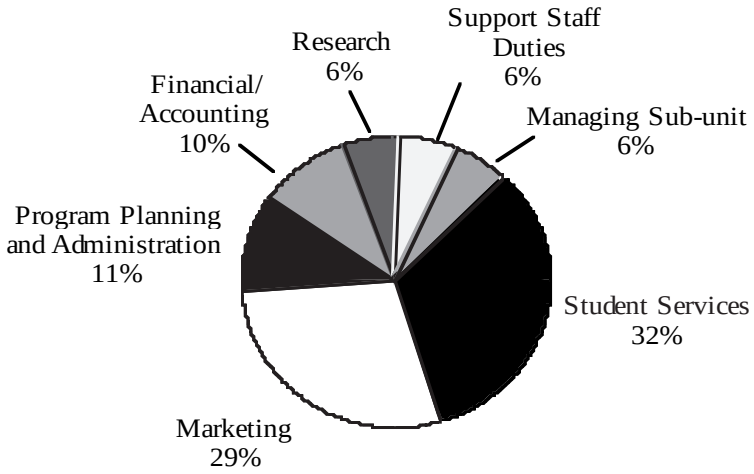


Figure 3. Program Head Responsibilities

Program Co-ordinator/Director/Specialist (n=87)

This was the largest job category. This group of continuing educators are usually referred to as Programmers, and they represent almost half the people (49 percent) working in university continuing education. Almost 24 percent had completed doctorates and another 12 percent were working on them. About one-third (29 percent) held academic rank, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10.
Academic Rank of Program Co-ordinators/Directors/ Specialists.

Rank	% (n=29)
Professor	17
Associate Professor	21
Assistant Professor	28
Instructor	17
Extension Specialist	7
Other	10

This was the largest category overall, and it also had the widest spread in age, from youngsters of 25 to those over 60 (see Table 12). The largest group (47 percent) were between 40–49 years old. Forty-two percent of people in this classification had less than five years of experience in continuing education (see Table 11). Men and women were almost equal in number in this category, but women still had a slight edge, making up 57 percent of the total.

Table 11.
Program Co-ordinators' Experience in Continuing Education.

Years	%(n=87)
1 or less	6
2 - 5	36
6 - 10	20
11 - 15	18
16 - 20	13
20 +	7

Table 12.
Age of Program Co-ordinators.

Age	% (n=87)
29 or less	5
30–39	22
40–49	47
50–59	24
60 +	2

As might be expected, Program Directors, Co-ordinators, and Specialists were heavily involved in program planning and administration: 80 percent of them listed this as a responsibility. Distance education was mentioned by 7 percent of respondents and research by 6 percent. Others reported being engaged in teaching (3 percent), and student services (2 percent). Managing a sub-unit and financial/accounting were each mentioned by one respondent.

From these data, a description of a Program Director, Co-ordinator or Specialist might be as follows: a woman, 45 years old, with a master's degree. She does not have academic rank, but has about five years of experience in continuing education. She spends almost all her time developing and administering programs.

Student Affairs/Marketing (n=14)

Half of this group had academic rank and included one Professor, two Associate Professors, one Extension Specialist, and two who did not specify their rank. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents had completed doctorates. Eighty-six percent were over 40 (see Table 14), and 51 percent had five years or less of experience in continuing education (see Table 13).

Table 13
Student Affairs/Marketing Staff Experience in Continuing Education.

Years	% (n=14)
1 or less	14
2–5	37
6–10	7
11–15	14
16–20	21
20 +	7

Table 14.
Age of Student Affairs/Marketing Staff.

Age	% (n=14)
29 or less	7
30–39	7
40–49	36
50–59	50
60 +	-

These people had a wide range of job responsibilities (see Figure 4). One-third reported being engaged in student services, and almost as many (29 percent) reported marketing as a responsibility.

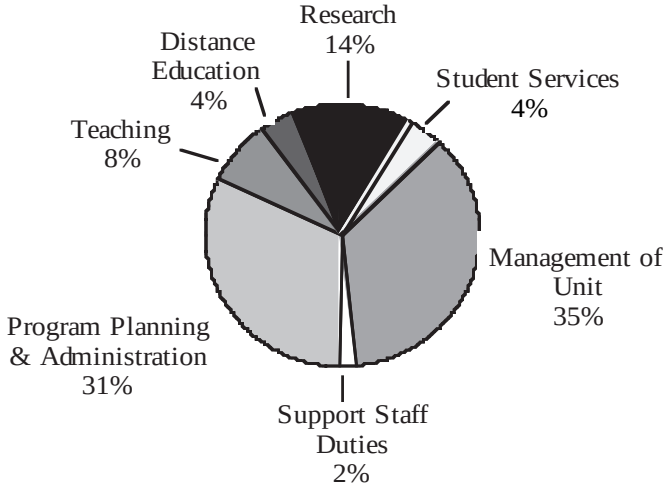


Figure 4. Student Affairs/Marketing Responsibilities.

From the data presented here, a description of a student affairs or marketing Specialist might be as follows: a woman, 55 years old, with a master's degree and holding academic rank, perhaps as an Associate Professor. She has about five years of experience and spends the majority of her time in student services.

The final job categories had so few respondents that descriptive profiles have not been developed. These job categories include: Program Assistant (n=7), Instructor/Teacher (n=1), Instructional Design/Teaching Development (n=3), and Support Staff (n=2).

Experience and Education Requirements

Anyone who is familiar with university continuing education is aware that when continuing education positions are filled there appears to be little consistency as to the educational qualifications and/or the amount of experience that candidates should possess. Even though the extant literature is not extensive, it too confirms these informal observations (Egan & Weaver-Paquette, 1994; Hein, 1992; Lawler & Fielder, 1993; Parker, 1994; Pearce, 1992a; Springfield & Hoffman, 1984). Since this was a national

survey, we felt it would be useful to obtain respondents' perceptions of the education and experience requirements for their current positions.

Respondents were asked to specify the combination of education (bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree) and length of experience they believe should be held by someone who was to replace them in their current position (for example, a master's degree and 5–10 years of experience). In order to minimize bias in the responses, three scenarios were posed. In considering their replacement's qualifications respondents were asked to specify:

a) the minimum combination of education and experience that would be required to do their job;

b) their preferred combination of education and experience, that is, the mix that they felt was the best; and

c) the most realistic combination, that is, if their university were actually looking for a replacement, what mix of education and experience would the selected candidate possess.

Not all the analyses addressing these questions produced statistically significant results; however, the ones that did are reported below. These questions were addressed using chi-square analysis.

Continuing Educators Holding Academic Rank

In terms of the minimum requirements that respondents felt were necessary to do their jobs, those with academic rank believed their jobs required significantly more education and experience than those without academic rank (χ^2 =33.28, *df*=8, *p*=.00005).

Turning to the requirements that respondents would prefer to see in their successor, those with academic rank generally noted higher levels of both education and experience than those without academic rank (χ^2 =39.91, *df*=8, *p*= .00000). Moreover, the higher their rank, the greater the education and experience that respondents preferred (χ^2 =45.46, *df*=30, *p*=.035). In other words, those who were Professors, felt the preferred qualifications were much greater than did Lecturers.

Finally, when asked to be practical and choose the most realistic combination of education and experience a successor might have, those with academic rank once again noted higher combinations of education and experience than those without academic rank (χ^2 =32.20, *df*=8, *p*=.0009). Similarly, the higher the rank, the greater the education and experience required (χ^2 =50.61, *df*=35, *p*=.043).

The findings presented in this section tend to confirm what we intuitively thought—that respondents holding faculty positions generally believe that their positions require higher levels of education and experience than those holding non-faculty positions. These findings are not surprising considering the relatively rigid requirements imposed on faculty members for higher degrees and the increasing years of experience necessary to move through the ranks. However, the findings are still worth reporting because they confirm that continuing educators in faculty positions, despite their administrative roles, are also subject to the same requirements as teaching faculty.

Education and Experience Required by Various Positions

The previous section discussed the experience and education requirements for those respondents holding faculty rank, but some interesting results were also uncovered by looking at particular continuing education positions. The findings reported below relate to the education and experience requirements for the positions of Dean, Assistant Dean, Program Head, Program Co-ordinator, and Student Affairs.

When Deans were asked to describe realistically the type of person who would actually be hired as their replacement, the majority (75 percent) felt it would be someone with a master's degree. Taking into account both education and experience, 6 percent believed that their successor would have a bachelor's degree and 5–9 years of experience, 53 percent felt that person would have a master's degree and 5–9 years of experience, and 18 percent were of the opinion that the university would hire a person with a doctorate, with anywhere from 0–20 years of experience.

When Assistant Deans/Directors were asked to predict who would be hired to replace them, most (55 percent) believed the person would have a master's degree and 0–10 years of experience, while one-third thought it would be someone with a doctoral degree and 0–10 years of experience.

Fifty-four percent of Program Heads/Chairs predicted their successor would be a person with a master's degree and 27 percent said their replacement would have a doctorate. When education and experience were both taken into account, most (41 percent) believed their successor would realistically have a master's degree and 5–9 years of experience; the next largest group (18 percent) chose a doctorate and 5–9 years of experience.

When Program Co-ordinators/Directors/Specialists were asked to describe the person most likely to replace them, 27 percent believed that person would have a bachelor's degree, 53 percent felt it would be someone

with a master's degree, and 17 percent thought a doctorate would be required.

Sixty-seven percent of Student Affairs/Marketing respondents believed that their successor would have a master's degree. Taking both education and experience into account, 50 percent said the person would have a master's degree and at least 5 years of experience, while 17 percent felt a doctorate and 5–9 years of experience would be required.

This group of findings must be interpreted with care, given the propensity for people to avoid cognitive dissonance. For example, people with a doctorate and long experience are not likely to suggest that anyone without that degree and experience could do their job. There is also likely some cognitive dissonance embedded in the respondents' answers, but the question was intended to get a sense of practitioners' perceptions, and for the most part, the responses appear relatively free of this problem. For example, 56 percent of Deans either held a doctorate or were working on one, and almost half (48 percent) had more than 10 years of experience. Despite that, 75 percent of them believed that their successor would only have a master's degree, and 53 percent agreed that their successor would likely have only 5–9 years of experience.

The results for the Assistant Deans and Program Heads were very similar. Even though a large proportion of both groups had completed a doctorate or were working on one (54 percent and 46 percent, respectively), a large percentage of both groups believed that their replacement would likely only have a master's degree (55 percent of Assistant Deans and 54 percent of Program Heads).

The discrepancy between the respondents' own qualifications and those they believe their institution would actually look for in hiring a replacement does not suggest that respondents are denying their own situation. Rather, it suggests they recognise the reality of the continuing education enterprise within their university. Although continuing educators may place personal or professional relevance on a doctoral degree (for example, 40 percent of respondents had a complete or partial doctorate), respondents in all positions were aware that their institution would likely replace them with someone with a master's degree. One explanation may rest on the fact that continuing education continues to have marginal status within the university environment (Donaldson, 1991). Respondents may themselves still feel marginal with respect to the value the organisation places on the work they do and, consequently, manifest this value in the lower levels of education and experience that they believe their

organization would require of a replacement.

The marginal nature of continuing education could also be the reason for the large number of management positions that are filled by relatively inexperienced people. Since senior managers (Deans, Assistant Deans, and, in many cases, Program Heads) are generally expected to set the academic, programming, and administrative direction for their unit, it would normally be expected that people filling these positions would have considerable experience in the field. University Deans, for example, in general have been in their respective academic fields for an average of 18 years (Pearce, 1992b); however, half of the Deans in this study (52 percent) and two-thirds of the Assistant Deans (64 percent) only had 0–10 years experience. Program Heads had even less experience in continuing education, with 50 percent being in the field 5 years or less. When an institution places only marginal value on one of its units, it is less important that people with substantial experience be appointed to leadership roles.

The relative lack of past experience demonstrated by those in leadership roles in continuing education also raises the question of whether people are hired because of interpersonal or other skills, or because of a background in an academic discipline, and not because of their knowledge of continuing education and adult learners. Again, the question must be asked, Do universities value continuing education and their adult learners? Of course, the answer may be that they do indeed value them, but for the revenue they bring to the institution. In this case, universities may be hiring people they believe can make money irrespective of their experience, background, or academic preparation.

A Question Of Gender

To this point, the study findings and the discussion related to those findings have focused on differentiating continuing educators by position or by education or by experience in the field. However, we also examined the data by gender to see if we might learn even more about university continuing educators.

Women accounted for 62 percent (110) of the respondents and men for 38 percent (69). A look at the distribution of men and women among the various job categories (as shown in Table 15) proved interesting in that, in every job category but two (Instructor and Instructional Designer), women

outnumbered men.

Table 15.
Distribution by Gender in Continuing Education Jobs.

Job Title	n	Women	Men
Dean/Director	23	52%	48%
Assoc./Asst. Dean	11	73%	27%
Program Head/Chair	26	58%	42%
Program Co-Ordinator/ Director/Specialist	87	66%	34%
Program Assistant	7	57%	43%
Student Affairs/Marketing	14	65%	35%
Professor	5	60%	40%
Instructor/Teacher	1	-	100%
Instructional Designer/Teaching Development	3	33%	67%
Support Staff	2	100%	-

The finding that women represented more than half the Deans and almost three-quarters of the Assistant Deans was interesting because there are still many more men than women who hold decanal positions in Canadian universities (AUCC, 1996). Indeed, as shown in Table 16, women were represented at much higher levels than in Canadian university faculty (AUCC, 1996) or in the general Canadian labour force (Statistics Canada, 1994).

Table 16.
Gender Distribution in Continuing Education, Canadian University Faculty (AUCC, 1996), and the Canadian Labour Force (Statistics Canada, 1994).

	Women	Men
Continuing Education	62%	38%
University Faculty	22%	78%
Canadian Labour Force	45%	55%

As for academic rank and tenure, 34 percent of women and 54 percent of men held academic rank ($\chi^2 = 7.05$, df=1, p=.0079); of these, overall, men held higher ranks than women ($\chi^2 = 18.33$, df=5, p=.0026). Figure 5 shows

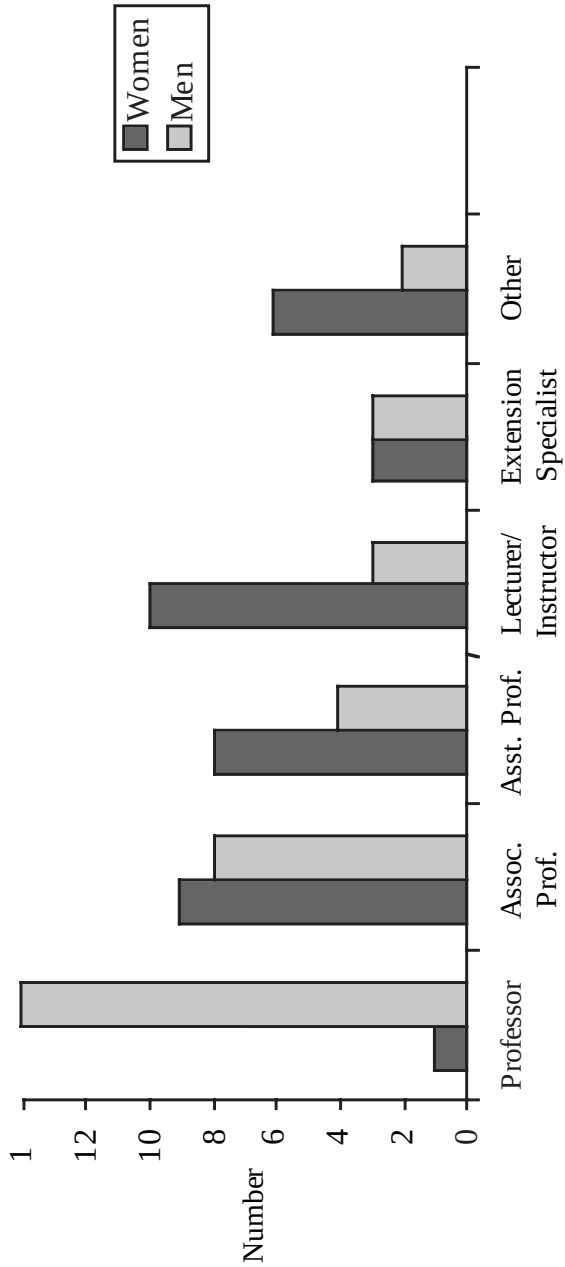


Figure 5. Women and Men in CAUCE with Academic Rank.

that only 3 percent (1) of women held the rank of Professor, compared to 41 percent (14) of men.

Comparing the academic rank of continuing educators with faculty at all Canadian universities (AUCC, 1996) shows similarities at the rank of Professor, but a much higher percentage of women continuing educators at the Associate and Assistant prefessor levels than for all university faculty (Table 17).

Table 17.
Faculty Rank of Continuing Educators Compared to All Canadian University Faculty.

Continuing Educators (n=71)				
	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Other
Women	7%	53%	67%	70%
Men	93%	47%	33%	30%
Canadian Universities (AUCC, 1996)				
	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Other
Women	10%	23%	36%	51%
Men	90%	77%	64%	49%

Men were significantly more likely to have tenure than their female colleagues (χ^2=23.43, *df*=2, *p*=.00001), with 19 women having tenure compared with almost twice as many men (36). In addition, regardless of whether they held academic rank or not, men tended to have more accumulated experience working in continuing education, as shown in Table 18 (χ^2=13.54, *df*=5, *p*=.019).

Table 18.
Length of Continuing Education Experience by Gender.

	5 yrs or less	6–10 yrs	11–15 yrs	16–20 yrs	20 + yrs
Women	40%	23%	21%	13%	3%
Men	26%	22%	19%	14%	19%

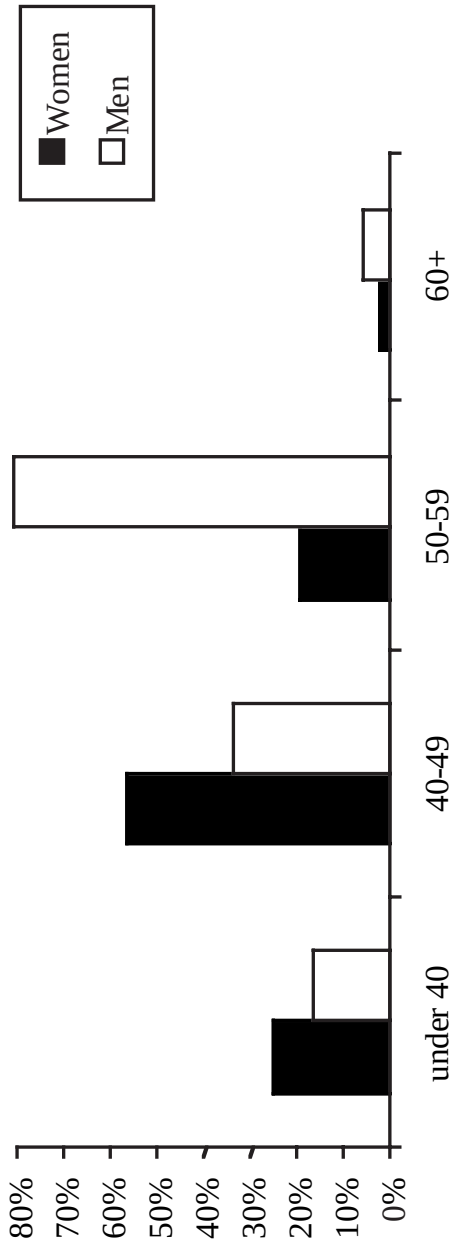


Figure 6. Age of Continuing Educators by Gender

As well as having more experience in continuing education, men also tended to be older than women (χ^2 =24.82, *df*=8, *p*=.0017) as seen in Figure 6.

In regard to educational level, 70 percent of the women had completed a master's degree, as compared to 85 percent of the men. Of those with a master's degree, 24 percent of the women had chosen Adult and Continuing Education as their major field of study, compared to only 11 percent of the men. Of those with a doctorate, more men than women majored in Adult and Continuing Education (men 34 percent, women 23 percent). Almost equal numbers of both sexes had some experience with doctoral study (33 women and 38 men); however, significantly more men than women had completed doctorates (c2 =19.92, *df*=3, *p*=.0002), as shown in Figure 7.

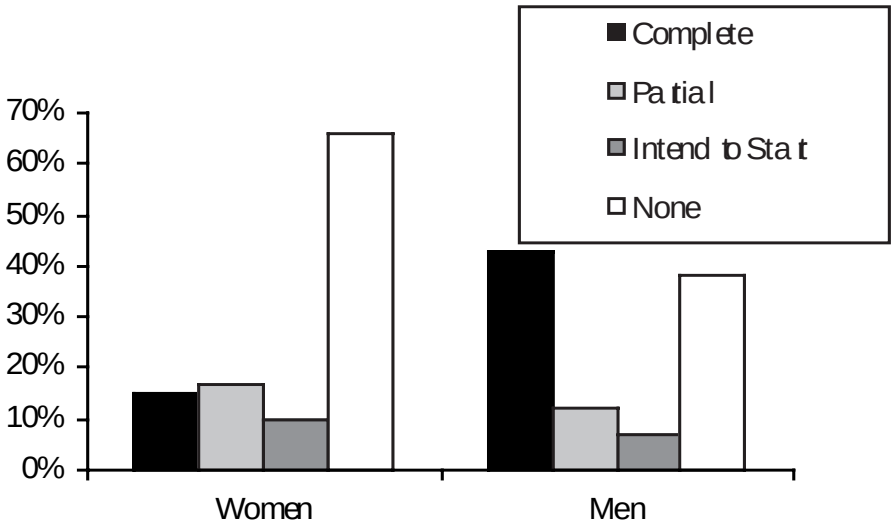


Figure 7. Doctoral Degrees by Gender

Finally, although women outnumbered men in all positions (except Instructional Design), men had more experience in continuing education and were older than women, and more possessed a doctorate. In addition, men were not only more likely to hold academic rank than women but they also held higher academic rank.

There are clearly a number of gender discrepancies, given that women comprise the majority of the workforce in continuing education. Even though women outnumber men in virtually all positions, this appears to be a relatively recent change; anecdotal evidence suggests it is only in the last 10 years or so that more women have entered the field in any great numbers. These findings may well indicate that continuing education is leading the way in ensuring gender equity in universities. On the other hand, the findings also raise the possibility that continuing education simply is not prestigious enough for men to consider as a career. The history and development of professions reveal that, historically, some professions were considered "feminine," such as nursing, teaching, and social work, and were often referred to as semi-professions; others, dominated by men, such as medicine, law, and university Professorships, have had considerably more prestige (Brint, 1994; Eraut, 1994).

The marginal status of continuing education (Donaldson, 1991) gives additional credibility to this negative interpretation. Universities have been notoriously slow in improving the gender ratio of their academic staff. If an already marginal unit is made more so by increasing the number of women in it, then even though the university benefits by being able to report more women, they are women in a marginal unit that will have little influence within the institution. So, the question becomes, As more women enter continuing education, will more men decide not to choose it as a career?

A somewhat different interpretation of the gender differences may be related to career mobility, career commitment, and career stagnation. Recent studies (Donaldson, 1990; NUCEA, 1989) have shown that many people who enter continuing education at lower levels do not expect to stay in the field—their work in continuing education is seen as a job, not a long-term career commitment.

Finally, on a more positive note, we can also interpret these findings as an indication of women's increasing acceptance in a university environment and as evidence of their ability to perform effectively in all continuing education positions. This interpretation is the strongest since it reflects similar changes in most other professions, all of which are exhibiting a steadily increasing number of women. It is also supported by recent literature that suggests that women bring a more cooperative and less hierarchical style to the workplace (Gilligan, 1982; Nicolson, 1996)—a working style that may find a strong match with the flexible environment of university continuing education. As Knox (1981) observed, continuing education has traditionally had a more permeable boundary for all kinds of

learners than the rest of the institution, and we may be seeing the same permeability here with respect to the employment of women.

Concluding Comments

This study brought to light a number of findings about university continuing educators and their work. Some of these confirmed beliefs that are widely held in the field, but have little empirical support. For example, it is widely believed that programming, metaphorically, is the bread and butter of continuing education, and this belief was strongly confirmed. What surprised us was the fact that almost everyone does some programming—whether it is their main job responsibility or not.

Other findings from the study were quite novel. We had little idea about the range of continuing education positions we would find, since, in our experience, most institutions have very different job descriptions for their continuing education staff. Similarly, we had no hypothesis about the range of job tasks and responsibilities, as there seemed to be little consensus on what continuing educators do. We consider the initial descriptions of job responsibilities and tasks in continuing education to be one of the major findings of this study, and one which we hope will encourage further research.

We were also surprised to find that many respondents believed their institution would hire someone with lower academic qualifications as their replacement. Since there was no indication that they believed themselves to be overqualified for their position, we interpreted this finding, in our earlier discussion, as another measure of the marginal nature of continuing education in Canadian universities. Although our interpretation provides a further confirmation of continuing education's marginality, we would encourage additional study in this area.

Another interesting group of findings related to the increasing number of women working in continuing education. Our earlier discussion of these findings indicated that continuing education is more open, both organizationally and in terms of its ideology of acceptance of "under-represented" groups than the parent university. In addition, the culture of continuing education may also be more accepting of differences given its work at the margins of the institution. Alternatively, perhaps continuing education is practising requisite variety by attempting to mirror its diverse environment (i.e., the potential gender balance of continuing education

students) in an effort to adequately adapt to that environment. These various interpretations suggest that there is some important research to be done in the area of gender in continuing education.

Some findings were quite gratifying. We were pleased to learn that continuing educators really do value lifelong learning—that continuing education is not just a job. For example, despite the fact that most of them generally believed that their institution only required a master's degree, 40 percent had a completed or partial doctorate. Certainly, this would seem to indicate a love of learning that was not tied to job requirements.

Overall, the results of this study have shown us the range of positions held by continuing educators in universities across Canada. They have also described, for the first time, a composite of the tasks and responsibilities undertaken by those working in the field. Through this study, we have also come to understand more about the people who hold continuing education positions, and it is hoped that the profiles developed for the various continuing education positions will serve as a basis for further discussion of the working roles of continuing educators. Clearly, this study has just touched the surface of the complex work performed by continuing educators in Canada. Further study, possibly a comparison of these findings with those from other countries, would be welcome and useful additions to the field.

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Biographies

All three authors have had extensive careers as university continuing educators with a combined total of more than 50 years experience in the field. Currently, Dr. Sandra Pearce is a Professor and Director of the School of Human Justice, University of Regina. Dr. Larry Hein, Professor of Engineering, University of Regina, took early retirement in 1997 and established Pine Tree Management Skills Inc., a private management firm. Dr. Joe Donaldson is Associate Professor and Associate Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri-Columbia.

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