Consolidating the Profession? The Professoriate in the 1950s and 1960s

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Abstract: This paper explores the development and growth of an adult education professoriate and adult education programs in higher education from 1945 until 1964. It examines specifically the factors that caused the growth of programs; decisions about curriculum; and the principal sources of funding. Additionally it explores the varying discussions and debates about the nature of the field.

It is almost a truism that adult education is a field under constant and continual development that has been ongoing since the 1920s. This constant and continual development has led to many programs opening and closing over the past century. Although there were several graduate programs in adult education before World War II, the real growth in the academic field occurred in the postwar era. This time of quiet unexplosive growth for graduate adult education was in response to concerns about the need for more professional and scientific approaches to research, resulting in an expansion of programs and an attempt to clarify the meaning of graduate study, which was reified in the so-called "black book" (1964). This period also included several critical developments for the field of adult education, namely: the Kellogg Centers for Continuing Education; funding for the founding of State Boards of Adult Education and the Center for the Study of Liberal Adult Education; and Human Relations training. All of these were funded by external and private foundations**.**

The purpose of this paper is to begin an analysis of the development and growth of an adult education professoriate and adult education programs in higher education from 1945 until 1964.A secondary purpose is to examine this growth and the concomitant development of the professoriate.

Adult Education and the Post-War Period

Academic graduate courses became prevalent starting in the 1930s. The first and most well-known program offering something called a degree in adult education was Teachers College at Columbia University. By 1948, Teachers College was still the only institution listed as offering a degree, although many other institutions offered a course or several courses that allowed students to specialize in adult education (Ely, 1948). Looked at in alternate fashion however, Houle (1961) indicates that by 1945 several other universities had awarded their first doctorates in adult education. These included: Ohio State University, University of Chicago, and the University of Pittsburgh. During the late 1940s, UCLA, the University of Illinois, and the University of Michigan also awarded doctorates.

Mezirow and Berry (1960) laid out the post-World War II growth of the field up to 1957 by enumerating the following: (1) The establishment of UNESCO and its "contribution to adult

education through field work, publications and the sponsorship of three international conferences" (p. vii); the founding of the National Training Laboratory for Group Development in 1947; the creation of three organizations, the Adult Education Association of the U. S. A., the Fund for Adult Education, and the Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults. They go on to claim that these three organizations "sparked the most intensive professional activity ever experience in American adult education with publications, conferences, research, program experimentation and training programs" (pp. vii-viii).

Grace (2000) saw the movement of adult education into academe as the triumph of a particular ideology or paradigm that privileged what he terms "instrumentalism" instead of the traditional backbone of the field, social education. However, this is a bit too simplistic because it ignores the continuously marginalized trajectory of academic adult education. And also, because it does not take into account the diverse forces that led to the development of a field. We agree with Grace, however, that this process was not inevitable, and we see the decisions made at particular junctures as privileging and focusing on particular aspects at the expense of others.

During the period under discussion we see a rapid expansion of programs due to a growth of research and an upsurge in funding. Although the largest spurt occurred outside of our focus for this study (after 1966), federal money for job training and basic education led to a demand for more trained professionals. What is interesting, however, is that these two trends were somewhat antithetical. The first focused on broad educational issues and liberal adult education while the second focused on basic skills and job preparation. This tension has followed the field ever since. Finally, we end this paper in 1964 because this was the time of the publication of the so-called Black Book that laid out a framework for adult education (Jensen, Liveright and Hallenbeck, 1964). The authors write, "This book had to be written not because the world needed it but because the university professors of adult education needed to write it" (p.xiii).

In 1956, Houle contended "as the professors of adult education undertake their work on campus after campus, they are discovering independently the fundamental shape of the field they have entered and the emerging profession they are helping to create. As yet, however, both the field and the nature of the profession are only imperfectly understood by the multitudes who identify as educators of adults" (p. 132). We argue that programs and the professoriate who serve them still struggle with these same issues, shaping the way current and future adult education graduate programs develop.

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