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### Recommended Citation

Alfred, Mary V. and Guo, Shibao (2007). "Globalization and the Internationalization of Adult and Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada and the United States," *Adult Education Research Conference*. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2007/papers/1>

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# **Globalization and the Internationalization of Adult and Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada and the United States**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which adult higher education in Canada and the US was responding to the impact of globalization through the internationalization of research, curricular, and practice. Adult educators must be more deliberate in planning for a global civil society.

Both Canadian and American universities are becoming increasingly ethnoculturally diverse and globalization is a major force shaping the demographic transformation of these two countries. According to Smith (2007), globalization is fueled by two contradictory phenomena—production and consumption. Smith describes globalization as the restructuring of capital, the integration of financial markets, and the movement of jobs to foreign countries. Internationalization, on the other hand, is influenced by immigration and globalization and represents “deliberate, systematic, and integrated attempts by national governments, supranational agencies, and higher education institutions themselves to engage in a range of international activities” (Enders & Fulton, 2002, p. 1). Knight (1993) specifically describes the internationalization of higher education as the “process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of higher education” (p. 21). The rapidly increasing foreign-born population calls for adult higher education to redefine its curricula and practice.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Qiang (2003) argues that internationalization will become increasingly important in the higher education sector because academic and professional requirements for graduates increasingly reflect the demands of the globalization of societies, economy, and labor markets, and as a result, higher education must provide adequate preparation to meet these requirements. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which adult higher education faculty and programs in Canada and the US were moving towards the internationalization of research, curricular, and practice in order to better respond to the needs of their increasingly diverse populations. Noting that academic transformation begins with the creation and dissemination of knowledge, two primary questions guided our investigation: (a) What is the level of faculty engagement in cross national research, and (b) In what ways do adult education programs reflect an international perspective in curricula?

## **Conceptual Framework**

Qiang (2003) identifies four primary approaches in the investigation of the internationalization of higher education: the activity approach, the competency approach, the ethos approach, and the process approach. The activity approach focuses on higher education activities that promote an intercultural dimension. These include the presence of international students, curriculum, and student/faculty exchange. The competency approach emphasizes the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that are important for one to compete in the global marketplace. The ethos approach, on the other hand, emphasizes creating a culture or climate that values and supports intercultural/international perspectives and initiatives. Finally, the process approach stresses the integration of an international and intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service through a combination of activities, policies, and procedures. The process approach was appropriately used for this study as it encompasses the activity, competency, and ethos approaches, all of which we found relevant to this exploration.

## **Methodology**

This was a qualitative research that utilized content analysis (Patton, 2002) to address the research questions. Thus, we conducted the following activities in generating the data: (a) a review and analysis of the 1995-2005 conference papers from AERC and CASAE for evidence of faculty engagement in transnational/intercultural research, and (2) a review of the curricula and program offerings of selected institutions found on program web sites for evidence of an international perspective. In conducting an analysis of the proceedings, we reviewed each paper title and abstract for such key words as international education, globalization, cross cultural studies, comparative education, cross national study, among others. We also included studies with names of specific countries and cultures in the title or abstract. The second set of data analyzed were program offerings and course descriptions of the top 10 institutions in the United States and the top 10 universities in Canada which offer adult education programs. We used Internet sites for this procedure. For Canada, we searched one prime university in each of the ten provinces. The top 10 US rankings came from a benchmark survey conducted by the adult education faculty of Texas A&M University in 2003 (Clark, 2005). The faculty surveyed adult educators from well-known adult education programs and asked them to provide a list of the programs they considered to be the top in the nation. We visited the web sites of these universities and reviewed their program information and course descriptions.

## **Findings**

The results show a lack of mass critical engagement in research related to global issues. For Canada, we searched a total of 659 CASAE conference presentations, and only 47 papers (6.72%) were found relating to the broad themes of internationalization and globalization. For AERC, we reviewed a total of 838 papers and found 76 presentations (8.11 %) with an international focus (See Table 1). It is clear that not much attention has been devoted to this topic among adult education scholars. This finding reflects similar observation from other mapping projects about the under-representation of globalization in current research (Butterwick, Fenwick, & Mojab, 2003). Among the

research, we found a rich diversity of topics and that scholars took both an individual and a collaborative approach to international research.

*Research Reflects Rich Diversity of Topics*

The limited number of presentations with an international dimension reflects a rich diversity of topics, including literacy, informal learning, citizenship education, health and nutrition education, transformative learning, community development, non-governmental organizations, social movement learning, popular education, literacy in international contexts, globalization and its impact, challenging western views of learning, among others. They addressed many important questions, such as: What is globalization? What is the driving force of globalization? What is the impact of economic globalization on university adult education? How should adult education respond to the globalization agenda? Does labor education accommodate the corporate structuring caused by globalization or does it provide resistance? Whose interest does literacy serve? What prevents adults from participating in literacy education? Why should adult educators be involved in community development and social movement? What are some of the institutional barriers to population education and social movement learning? How do immigrant students navigate the foreign academic culture? How does post-colonialism affect adult education in developing countries?

**Table 1: CASAE Proceedings: 1995 – 2005**

Year	Papers	Symposia	Roundtables	Total	Papers Related to IN, GL	Percent of Total
1995*	54	1	0	55	1	1.82
1996	53	0	0	53	4	7.55
1997	34	0	0	34	3	8.82
1998	53	0	0	53	8	15.09
1999	39	3	9	51	2	3.92
2000*	99	5	32	136	5	3.68
2001	29	7	0	36	5	13.89
2002	58	7	10	75	5	6.67
2003	40	6	3	49	4	8.16
2004*	91	3	13	107	8	7.48
2005	43	2	5	50	2	4.00
Total	593	34	72	699	47	6.72

**Table 2: AERC Proceedings: 1995 – 2005**

Year	Papers	Symposia	Roundtables	Total	Papers Related to IM, IN, GL	Percent of Total
1995*	54	1	0	55	5	9.09
1996	53	0	4	57	4	7.02
1997	50	0	0	50	4	8.0
1998	51	3	0	54	4	7.47
1999	50	8	0	58	6	10.34
2000*	99	5	32	136	5	3.68
2001	80	0	0	80	7	8.75
2002	69	0	0	69	8	11.59
2003	77	2	0	79	6	7.59
2004*	91	3	13	107	8	7.48
2005	71	3	19	93	11	11.83
Total	745	25	68	838	68	8.11

\*Joint Conference of AERC and CASAE; therefore, numbers are repeated in each table.  
 IN = Internationalization                      GL = Globalization

Most presentations were single country studies (e.g., adult literacy in Swaziland, popular education in India, economic impact and structural adjustment in Africa, adult education and English language education in Romania, aging and learning in Malaysia), often applying North American concepts to a different social, political, and cultural context. A small number adopted a comparative approach involving two or more countries. Examples were citizenship education in Canada and Brazil; university adult education in Canada and the UK; and civil society, cultural hegemony, and adult education in North America, Latin America, and the Middle East). Regarding their geographic locations, Africa and Asia were overly represented in these studies; thirteen of the Canadian papers and twenty-one of the US papers had to do with research in these two continents. We also found that some studies mirrored the two countries lingering colonial past involving commonwealth countries (11 papers)

#### *Transnational Collaborations*

Turning to the process of knowledge production and dissemination, we found that the majority of the papers in Canada were single authored, while those in the US were

more evenly distributed between those that were single authored and those completed in collaboration, where one or more of the authors were from an international country. In the case of individual research, the author often traveled to a foreign country to collect data relative to that country. We found these single-authored papers to be those of university professors who had other affiliations, for example, the church or other missionary organization. Meanwhile, our analysis revealed that there was an active participation from international graduate students in collaboration with a professor/advisor from the host country. A significant number of the papers reviewed were the result of such collaborations. Furthermore, the joint conferences of AERC and CASAE tend to attract a number of researchers from outside North America, to include Africa, Asia, Australia, Germany, Malaysia, New Zealand, and the UK. These joint conferences have become an international forum for adult educators to disseminate research, form partnerships, and learn from one another.

*Evidence of Internationalization in the Curricula of Adult Education*

From program websites, we reviewed the programs, course offerings, and course descriptions of the top adult education programs in both countries for evidence of international perspective that Knight speaks of. Based on course titles and/or course descriptions, four universities from the US and four from Canada were found to have at least one course with an international focus (See Tables 3 & 4.) Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and University of BC in Canada and Penn State in the US appear to be well on their way to internationalizing their curriculum. Our review also revealed three focus areas related to internationalization and globalization: (a) comparative and international adult education; (b) the relationship of globalization with adult education; and (c) adult education in a broader global context.

**Table 3: International Dimensions of AE Programs at Selected US Universities (May 2006)**

<b>Adult Education Programs at Selected Universities</b>	<b>International Dimension</b>	<b>Courses</b>
University of Georgia	Yes	International adult education
Penn State University	Yes	Lifelong learning in developing nations Globalization and lifelong learning Language, literacy, identity, & culture in global context Comparative and international education
Northern Illinois University	Yes	International Adult Education
Columbia Univ. Teachers' College	No	
North Carolina State University	No	
Texas A&M University	No	
Cornell University	Yes	Adult ed and globalization: Comparative perspectives
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	No	
University of Wisconsin-Madison	No	
National Louis University	No	

**Table 4: International Dimensions of AE Programs in Selected Canadian Universities**

<b>Adult Education Programs at Selected Universities</b>	<b>International Dimension</b>	<b>Courses</b>
University of Alberta	Yes	International Adult Education
University of British Columbia	Yes	Comparative and Intern'l Adult & Higher Education Adult Literacy, Gender, and Development: Focus on Asia Pacific Locating Oneself in Global Learning Global/Local Learning Gender Education and Globalization
University of Manitoba	No	
University of New Brunswick	No	
University of Prince Edward Island	No	
University of Saskatchewan	No	
McGill University	No	
Memorial University of Newfoundland	No	
Mount Saint Vincent	Yes	Lifelong Learning in International Contexts
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education	Yes	Comparative & Intern'l Perspectives in Adult Education Teaching about Global and Social Issues Political Economy of Adult Ed in Global Perspectives Transformative Education and the Global Community Global Governance and Educational Change

### **Discussions and Implications for Adult Education**

In Global issues and adult education: Perspectives from Latin America, South Africa, and the United States, Merriam, Cervero, and Courtney (2006) note, "Globalization is an exceedingly complex issue" (p. 486). It has the potential to build societies while it destroys individuals, groups, and communities within nation states. A small number of the conference papers examined the negative impact of economic globalization on adult education (Cruikshank, 1995), work and worker's education (Cruikshank, 1995, 2001; Spencer & Frankel, 1996), human rights (Mulenga, 2001), and immigrant women (Mojab, Ng, & Mirchandani, 2000). In respect of its impact on adult education, Cruikshank (1995) argues that under globalization, adult education has undergone massive funding cuts; it has been pressured to operate as businesses; profit making has become the priority; and the needs of marginalized groups have been ignored. In another study, Cruikshank (1996) explored the negative impact of economic globalization on the future of work. She maintains that globalization serves the interests of corporations at the expense of ordinary citizens. She identified the negative consequences of economic globalization as "high unemployment, increased poverty, a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, an increasing number of people who are homeless and forced to live on the streets of our cities, and a general feeling of helplessness" (p.62). Furthermore, globalization has adversely affected human rights for workers (particularly women workers), peasants and farmers, and indigenous communities, especially in the South (Mulenga, 2001).

However, Merriam et al see the potential for adult educators to transform adult education to respond more critically to the impact of globalization on marginalized populations. They suggest (a) we create space and listen to voices, (b) adopt a critical

stance (c) attend to policy, (d) develop partnerships, and (e) foster collective learning and action. To these we will add and give priority to a deliberate attempt to include and make visible an international dimension to their program. It is through the internalization of the curricula and through critical pedagogy that we can attend to the roles and responsibilities that Merriam et al speak of. Similarly, we must clearly define our goal as we set out to internationalize the field of adult education. Is it our goal to prepare graduates to meet the demands of global labor markets as Qiang (2003) spoke of, or is our goal to prepare graduates to respond through critical action to the impact of globalization on marginalized groups and communities? We hold the view that adult education has a responsibility to do both, because we see our role as building civil societies while preparing graduates to compete in the global marketplace for their economic well being. Yet, we are reminded that education is a contested domain, as the process of global destruction and transformation continue to empower and disempower various stakeholders in adult education. However, we must first start global conversations to explore the range of possibilities available through our collective action.

In summary, adult education has not taken a critical stance on engaging in conversations beyond the local (although some evidence is beginning to emerge from the margins as our data reveal). As Nesbit (2005) notes in his review of the Handbook of adult and continuing education (Wilson & Hayes, 2000) "I was surprised to find few authors refer to or reflect upon the national and international political issues that marked the 1990s. The corporate scandals, the rapid increase in economic globalization, the growing gap between rich and poor, the drift toward various fundamentalisms, continued conflict in the Middle East, including those of Iraq and Afghanistan (and a few others not so apparent), the demise of the Soviet Union, genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia... are hardly mentioned at all" (p. 74).

We found similar neglect from our reviews of the past ten years of AERC and CASAE proceedings. Most surprisingly, 9-11 terror attack did not stir us into action and neither has the US-led war in Iraq. Overall, this study is important as it shows the near static nature of American and Canadian adult education and the reluctance to move beyond the local to more global issues.

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