

of control and crashed into the fallen satellite... Both sides are claiming victory.

John Grierson (1986), the father of the National Film Board, is probably right, "Clowns are the true realists, super-realists, tragedians in disguise, because for them the essence of life is unexpected, the banana peel."

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The Changing Scene In Adult Education

Mark Waldron

"The Changing Scene in Adult Education" is an interesting and challenging topic — interesting in that adult education is caught up in the whirlpool of change that is so characteristic of North American society in 1986 and — challenging because it makes one stop and reflect on what is actually happening in this field.

This presentation is a personal viewpoint, not based on empirical data and with no long list of references. Instead, it is an observational paper based on what I see and hear from a University campus that is located at an urban-rural interface — with a large megalopolis of more than 4 million to the east and south and a traditional farm-based rural economy to the west and north. An hour's drive east takes me to the

Waldron is Director and Professor, University School of Part-time Studies and Continuing Education, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario. This invited paper was presented at the 32nd Annual NACTA Conference, Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology, Ridgetown, Ontario, June 1986.

financial canyons of Bay Street, Toronto; an hour's drive west takes me to the isolated shores of Lake Huron. In between, we find those people who are striving to make a living, raise families, volunteer in their communities, and take time to learn new things and new ways of thinking about social issues. These people are the adults of the community, the major ingredient of the adult/continuing/extension program mix about which we are concerned. These people are representative of North American society and, in fact, are probably not much different from people on other continents.

My challenge, then, is to encapsulate the changing scene in specific areas. I have chosen ten aspects of adult education as a means of focusing on some of these changes. I realize that you are representing Faculties and Colleges of Agriculture; I realize that many of you are experiencing enrollment declines; I realize that agriculture is having a very difficult time coping with the challenge of abundance; I realize that many rural communities are going through very severe economic times, but I also believe that we will survive these current experiences and learn from them.

Scene #1 — The actual number of adults participating in continuing education programs is increasing; 20% of Canadian adults participate in at least one organized adult education activity each year. The participation rate of older adults is also increasing; these older adults are becoming more demanding and more vocal in terms of what they want to learn. Historically, more females than males participated — this is changing with the participation rates between males and females becoming more equal.

Scene #2 — In terms of the types of programs, there is significantly more demand for career, job-related types of programs. There is less "learning for learning's sake" and more learning for career enhancement and mobility. Learners are more results oriented and more product oriented, and as a result, programs become more market-oriented. In fact, the big words in education have become marketing and money — and not necessarily in that order. I see this change as I review course and program topics — there is less of the general group dynamics/transactional analysis type of course and more of the personal management/computer skills types of courses.

Scene #3 — Associated with scene two, there is an increasing demand for short, intensive training sessions leading to certificates and diplomas, rather than more degrees or no recognition at all. Learners are requesting this recognition for learning since certificates, diplomas and continuing education units (C.E.U.'s) have taken on value in the employment market place. Learners want conspicuous reward for their efforts and are willing to make significant sacrifices in order to complete a certificate program.

This scene is coloured by the emphasis that governments are placing on skills development, job

training and retraining and professional development. In many cases, these consist of short, intensive, total-immersion types of courses interspersed with on-the-job experience.

Scene #4 — There is also an increasing emphasis on literacy — of all types and at all levels. Despite all the educational institutions, there are a number of people in our society who cannot read and write but there is more to literacy than just adult basic education. Some maintain, in fact, that in today's visually-oriented society, it is not necessary to be able to read and write but as an academic, I cannot subscribe to that concept. There is more to literacy than just reading and writing. I refer to such things as computer literacy — the ability to communicate through the various electronic information technologies. There is a new vocabulary, a new way of encoding messages and a whole new way of thinking when one develops computer literacy. The product of adult education today must not only be able to read and write but must also be able to communicate in new ways and through new channels. People want to learn how.

Scene #5 — There is increased leisure time today, although some of us wonder who has it! The workplace is changing drastically with the use of robots, microprocessors and an industrial emphasis on efficiency. Statistics indicate that we are working fewer hours and having longer vacations. One company, 3M in nearby London, Ontario, is paying some employees a full week's salary for working only on Saturday and Sunday. I wonder what those employees will be doing from Monday to Friday.

As we have more leisure time, we are using that time for educational pursuits. We can only jog so much, we can only travel so far — adult education provides an opportunity for us to make good use of our leisure time — a use that is tax deductible and non-returnable.

Scene #6 — Another important part of the changing scene is the interest in and concern for programs dealing with social issues. As society becomes more complex and interdependent, there is an increasing demand for opportunities to develop philosophies and policies relating to key social issues that impact on our lives — social issues such as acid rain, free trade, land use planning, social security systems, family violence and waste disposal. One hardly has to market programs dealing with social issues; there are so many vocal opinions and so little supporting data, that all one has to do is suggest a small seminar on the topic, and you soon have a major international conference. Many of these social issues are at the very heart of agriculture and rural living, especially those dealing with land use and waste disposal.

Scene #7 — The scenery of adult education is not complete without a comment about funds and funding.

Most adult education programming is entrepreneurial, market driven and consumer responsive. Fees are charged, resource people are paid, rooms are rented and a profit/surplus is usually produced. Many of us, however, are experiencing, in 1986, decreasing budgets and more accountability. This, in turn, leads to reassessing our priorities. When this happens, programs change. The result of all this is that adult education programs are becoming even more market driven as they become more self-supporting. As a result, I see programming changing to focus more on dollar return rather than on the educational process.

As educators, this presents a real dilemma to us. Do we develop programs according to what we perceive are community needs and interests, or do we provide programs that balance the budget and provide surpluses? In 1986, we are becoming more financially results-oriented than educationally change-oriented.

Scene #8 — As adult education becomes more of a market place and a consumer-oriented commodity, I am also seeing the increasing involvement of the private sector in adult education. Several profit-oriented companies are providing adult education programs as their primary mandate, while other companies are providing educational opportunities for other reasons. The high technology industries are well known for their educational programs and present major competition to the traditional institutions. In rural communities, today, you will find that a major component of the adult/continuing/extension education programming is being provided by feed, seed, chemical and pharmaceutical firms. These programs are professionally developed, results oriented, financially subsidized and dynamically presented and are highly competitive with the traditional educational services. They may not have the credibility or the legitimization typical of traditional institutions, but what they lack in credibility they make up with professionalism.

Scene #9 — Part of the changing scene of adult education has to do with the increasing demands we are receiving for learning opportunities from foreign countries. The subject matter tends to focus on agriculture and rural development in developing countries; the process tends to be relatively short, intensive courses, tailor-made for people from the developing world. These people are looking to North America for leadership and innovation, for technology and for skills-oriented training with an underlying emphasis on project management.

Five years ago, it was necessary for adult education programmers to be very aggressive in reaching out to developing countries but now, in 1986, I note that representatives of these countries are now coming to us for a response to their very specific training requests.

Scene #10 — The most rapidly changing scene in adult education has to do with the use of informational

and educational technology. Our ancestors would be absolutely amazed if they could see the plethora of extension technologies that we have available today — audio-cassettes, television, videotape, computers, teleconferencing, computer conferencing, satellite delivery, etc. Each of these has immediate application to adult and extension education; the key problem is deciding how to use these new technologies to deliver education. We have the hardware; what is needed now is to develop quality software.

Much of this technology is being used in what we refer to, in Canada, as distance education — systems designed to extend education in a non-face-to-face situation. Many of these technologies are typical of the 1980s — many were not available five years ago. Each of them holds new and exciting potentials for the way in which education is delivered to those who cannot afford the luxury of two or four year residential learn-

ing experiences. They will be particularly useful in extending professional development learning opportunities — the computer disk, the videotape and the telephone and satellites really can be of tremendous benefit in reaching out to new clientele groups.

Summary

The ten scenes are part of the adult education landscape of 1986, changing scenes and landscapes that provide us with new ways of looking at education in the future. It is an exciting field and a field that has the potential of having tremendous impact on the teaching and learning styles of our traditional classroom settings. As we face the future, it is up to each of us to explore and learn, to create and imagine, to challenge and question, and to review and plan. That is what adult education is about in 1986 — truly a changing scene.

Reflecting On Quality Teaching

Robert C. Kirst

I would like to share a story with you. As a freshman at Louisiana State University I was a vagabond, not sure of where I was going or what I was doing. I majored in petroleum engineering because of the influence of a high school teacher. After several semesters I changed my major to animal science, still not sure of what I would do if I were to earn a degree. I eventually completed the degree but had not given up my vagabond status.

During graduate school the focus was on training for research, never dreaming that some day my primary responsibility might be teaching.

My first job after graduate school was teaching. Not having any training for this occupation, and knowing that I would have to be in the classroom, I began to try to figure out what I was going to do. Since time would not allow me to go back to school, I began to look at the teachers from whom I had learned the most. Based on recollections of my outstanding teachers, I decided to "do unto others as I had been done unto". Over the years this philosophy has served me well. You often hear "when in doubt, punt", but when punting isn't an option, copy the best plays. When I studied the characteristics of the best teachers I had had, I found three qualities were consistent among them: commitment, enthusiasm along with honesty or fairness.

Commitment meant that they remained current, not only in their field but in associated fields. These were not men who said everything they had to say in the first lecture and expounded on that from then on.

Address presented by Robert C. Kirst, University of Arkansas at Monticello, as the incoming NACTA president during the 32nd Annual NACTA Conference, Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology, Ridgetown, Ontario, June, 1986.

They read, they studied, they grew professionally. Commitment also meant dedication to the student as an individual. They listened to both my head and my heart. Their commitment was not to promote their agenda but to aid me in my search. They related to my personal needs and helped me negotiate the system. As a freshman had I been able to find my advisor, I might be a petroleum engineer today.

The teachers whom I chose to copy also appeared to be eager to share their information with the student. They were good salesmen for their products. They found ways of packaging their information to make it stimulating and entertaining so that I looked forward to going to their classes. A student once told me that he didn't "give a damn about trees, but when Mr. Townsend talks about them, I'm sitting on the edge of my chair". Hal Townsend was one I chose to copy.

Although commitment and enthusiasm were paramount qualities in each of the teachers I admired most, honesty or fairness was their cornerstone. Student evaluations were based on impartial judgments. Grades were given on the basis of a student's performance and not the professor's ego.

After a number of years of teaching, I discovered an organization called NACTA. I attended a NACTA annual conference only to discover that one of the men I had been copying, my field crops instructor, Russ Miller, was the Southern Director. Since that beginning, I have found that NACTA is an organization of involved, dedicated and enthusiastic educators.

Just as Russ Miller profoundly touched my life, we as teachers touch the lives of students never knowing how many of them are vagabonds. This is why NACTA must remain a wellspring to refresh and revitalize the dedication, honesty and enthusiasm of each of its members. No one shares a cup of cold water from an empty bucket.