

ADULT EDUCATION IN THE USA ISSUES AND TRENDS

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Author's Note

The audience for whom this monograph is intended is composed of adult educators, policy makers and planners, and others interested in the intersection of education and the larger society. The phenomenon of adult education in both its formal and informal dimensions has been an integral part of the human saga from its roots. The parable of Adam and Even may be the first recorded incident of learning in adulthood, with disastrous, and some claim lasting results since along with the knowledge of good and evil mankind was sentenced to a life of unremitting toil. While it is not my intention to overly dwell upon the history of adult learning in the USA, there is an important need to flesh out the historical and cultural dimensions of this phenomenon. Plus early training as an historian has inclined me to devote more space to this facet than others might, especially those with different academic training. Yet, it is also my conviction that interpretations rooted in history satisfy a human need to come to grips with causality. While I do not subscribe to an overarching concept of *progress* in the sense of an evolutionary tendency toward perfection, the desire to improve and build upon past achievements takes both its cue and direction from interpretations of history. And in examining adult education in America, it is striking how often historical themes shape the most modern iterations of lifelong learning.

Any subject as complex as American adult education presents a daunting challenge for an author. What to include or omit? How to make sense of our practice for foreign readers coming from different traditions? And, to write objectively, with full appreciation for the richness and diversity characterizing adult education in America and also its shortcomings and flaws.

The organization I have followed incorporates three major sections. In the first I outline the background, themes, and current trends in United States (US) adult and continuing education. This section is based upon a presentation at the DIE in the fall of 1998. In Section II, I present case studies of the most vibrant sectors of American adult education practice including higher education, virtual universities, the proprietary or for-profit sector, the redefined public school sector including regional organizations, and the corporate university movement. In each of these areas developments are occurring at lightning speed. This rapid rate of change is both welcome, but also fraught with difficulties as I will explain at some length in Section III where I look at some of the weaknesses and problems in our highly open system whose borders and boundaries are constantly changing. I conclude with a description of six ways of viewing adult education presenting metaphors designed to expand its range of possibilities.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my parents, Sara and Ben, who instilled in me a love of learning and curiosity for all things under the sun.

SECTION I BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Introduction

What is Adult and Continuing Education?

The definition used by the United States Department of Education in both its 1995 and 1998 surveys is “[c]ollege, vocational, or occupational programs, continuing education or noncredit courses, correspondence courses and tutoring, as well as courses and other educational activities provided by employers, community groups, and other providers.” (NCES, 1998, p.354.).

An adult is defined as anyone 16 years of age and older who is not in the military nor in prison (P. Stowe, personal communication, February 18, 1999). Education is interpreted as any formally structured learning activity in which there is an instructor and curriculum. This could include study groups in which the members take turns as leader and has a curriculum for the session. According to Stowe, “the definition is inclusive but excludes a great deal of informal learning such as reading a book, teaching yourself a software program, or learning from a coworker who is a mentor.”

The study, which surveyed approximately 20,000 households revealed, according to the above definition, that 40% of adults participated in adult education in 1995, up from 32% in 1991. Of those who participated, about 21% took work-related courses, 20% enrolled in personal development courses, and 6% were in part-time courses related to a degree, diploma, or certification (p.58). This is a considerable expansion from earlier national studies which showed lower participation rates. For example, the first national study of US adult education participation by Johnstone and Rivera (1965, cited in Merriam and Brockett, 1997, p. 130) found a participation rate of 22% for *any kind* of learning activity, the majority of which was practical rather than academic. In the U.S.

Government Surveys, participation rates jumped from 14% in 1984 to 32% in 1991 and to 40% in 1995. The climb may be linked to “a possible increase in the demand for adult education as a result of rapid changes in technology and the job market” (Kopka and Peng, 1993, cited in Merriam and Brockett, 1997, p. 131) or in changes in survey methodology.

A Broadened Concept of Adult Learning

Definitions of adult and continuing education have evolved throughout this century. Courtney in the Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education (1989) devotes a chapter to unraveling and elucidating the variety of meanings that have attached themselves to these terms including its numerous permutations such as adult learning, lifelong learning, continuous learning, learning of the third age, and popular education, although these last two have come to have more specific applications. As Courtney comments (p.15), one’s definition of adult education is likely to be determined by context and personal experience. It could include English as a Second Language, studying the Great Books, senior citizen programs, as well as computer training, programs for licensure and certification. Interestingly, recent NCES instruments have included college courses as continuing education which is a considerable conceptual broadening from earlier meanings of adult education.

A great deal of adult education has been either remedial second-chance education or recreational in nature imparting to the field the impression of “soft pedagogy.” (Dyer, 1956) But as the introduction of technology to the workplace has accelerated, compelling continuous training in all phases of production and service (see Zuboff, 1988), the importance of these learning endeavors have increased as standards have climbed. Accordingly, it is likely that current pervasive images of continuing education are more strongly vocational/occupational as opposed to its other variants, especially liberal adult

education, or remediation.

Within this broadened framework of vocationalism we can include *all* career focused education entered into by adults, but *also* degrees of a more general nature since these qualify graduates for entry into higher level occupations and occupational ranks. In fact, with the upward drift of educational requirements for all employees, the quickening pace of technology and change in the workplace, we are undoubtedly entering a phase of *constant, ongoing, lifelong learning* for those who wish to remain occupationally viable. Such a development is entirely consistent with the history and development of adult education in the United States since this country's 18th century founding.

Informal and Formal Adult Education

US Government adult education participation rates exclude a great deal of informal learning such as teaching yourself a software program, reading a book, or learning from a co-worker who is a mentor. An earlier study by Tough (1978, cited in Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982, p. 119) asking Americans if they studied any subject during the preceding twelve months recorded a participation rate of approximately 90%! It is safe to assume that with the greater accessibility of knowledge through electronic media, more people will be able to pursue learning independently by means of these computer mediated venues. The World Wide Web (WWW) in particular, puts voluminous information literally at one's fingertips. This includes access to people, databases, organizations and institutions of bewildering variety. With new electronic tools such as linked computers the capability of independent autodidactic approaches to learning increases. (For a discussion of autodidacticism and self-directed learning see Candy, 1991). It is impossible to predict where this will lead and the implications for more formally structured learning. For example, will people introduced to subjects through the Internet subsequently follow-up by taking traditional courses? Will adult participation follow prior patterns, with the most educated more inclined to use technology or will computer technology reach deeply within our society, exposing many more to continuing education? According to the 1998 US Government study, adults with higher education levels were more inclined to participate in adult education activities than those with less (p.58). As an example, 60% those with college degrees or higher pursued adult education compared with 30% of those with high school diplomas or the equivalent.

Formal Participation

It is the structured world of adult and continuing education which is most palpable and obvious. This domain of institutions, administrators, faculty, and students quickly comes to mind whenever we conceive of the organized field of education, regardless of level or subject. Additionally, the related terminology of courses, programs, degrees, certificates, diplomas, and fees comes into play as well. The largest part of this monograph therefore addresses the structured dimension of adult education because it is through the array of deliberate and rationalized delivery systems that the content and values of the field are expressed. Moreover, the importance of adult education as a cultural, economic, and political instrument is many times multiplied by its institutional dimension which provide focus, resources, and often critical reflection.

The Organization of Adult Education

Because the location and practice of continuing education varies throughout American society, a number of classifying schema have been developed. In fact, developing analytical and descriptive "maps of the field," much as biologists attempt to make sense of the flora and fauna of a newly discovered biosystem, have been intrinsic to all attempts at understanding adult education. This is chiefly because of the staggering range of continuing education opportunities

available in the USA.

Kowalski's (1988) framework is based upon prior typologies which classify agencies providing continuing education into a number of categories. He uses six for identifying sponsoring organizations (p.27).

Type A: Institutions which provide adult education as an exclusive function.

Type B: Educational institutions which offer adult education as a secondary function.

Type C: Community service agencies which provide adult education as a secondary function

Type D: Private organizations and agencies which provide adult education as a secondary function.

Type E: Voluntary organizations and groups which provide adult education as a secondary function.

Type F: Government agencies which provide adult education as a secondary function.

What is especially interesting about this plan is the underlying matrix which is solely composed of two variables: *priority of continuing education* and *type of institution*. And while Kowalski is exquisitely sensitive to the complexities of organizational sponsorship and their varieties, the cleavage between type A, and types B through F is a monumental divide requiring further exploration.

When national data was collected in 1975 as to the location of courses taken by adults (cited in Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982, p.127), the most frequently mentioned sites were colleges or universities (30.4%), school buildings (25.1%), hotel or other commercial buildings (11.4%), place of work (8.3%), private home (6.7%), church or other religious property (4.9%), and community center, library, or museum (4.6%). Thus, by inference, Types B through F institutions predominate wherein adult education takes a secondary role and is supportive of other institutional goals.

The Concept of Continuing Education "Marginality"

Sociologist Burton Clark (1956) was among the first to draw attention to the separation of adult and continuing education offices from core institutional mission and values. His analysis of public school adult education described the dynamics of continuing education as having different foci from the larger school organization. Within this system, adult education was at the periphery rather than the core, hence marginal. For example, the short run needs of continuing education programs to maintain enrollment within the school are *"incompatible with the long-run [institutional] need of obtaining educational respectability."* (p.124, emphasis in original). This dislocation has been an ongoing issue in the adult and continuing education field with authors opining that marginality can be either a blessing or curse, having the freedom to go its own way but often with inadequate resources. Nonetheless, the ascription of marginality to adult education within institutions not created specifically for that purpose is rarely contested. The reasons for this marginality, except for *ex post facto* determinations are elusive and cannot be fixed with precision. There are doubtlessly converging multiple factors but institutional priority is certainly the most important ground. Other explanations are allegations of academic inferiority of students and faculty, and a "market" rather than "professional" orientation.

The Centrality of Training in a Knowledge-Based Economy.

The ubiquitous introduction of computer technology throughout virtually all workplaces and fields of labor have mandated ongoing continuing education at all occupational levels. These learning requirements vary by job levels and skills. Some applications requiring no more than informal peer learning groups for self-

directed on-the-job training, or brief workshops, and perhaps, in some cases, formally structured courses of a much longer duration offered in-house or at a cooperating educational institution, such as a university. What is true in each and every case, however, is the temporary and ephemeral nature of being "skilled." The rapid rate of innovation within the modern technological environment means the staged introduction of new tools of enhanced sophistication capable of performing a greater number of functions. These dictate additional training.

Will the creation of "user friendly" or "smart machines" of greater power and subtlety eventually eliminate, or drastically reduce, the need for training? My answer is a resounding "no". I view this wish as a *chimera* comparable to that of the "paperless office" which was to evolve following the introduction of networked computers capable of transmitting and storing data that had been previously conveyed only in printed formats. Moreover, additional factors promoting the need for workplace continuing education include the added pressures of global competition, the need to contain costs and decrease production time, the rapid pace of change in all fields, expansion of knowledge, and the shadow of obsolescence haunting all products, drastically shortening their commercial value. The upward drift of knowledge requirements is a new fact of life we must all accommodate; there are no isolated safe havens in the modern industrial world. Thus there are inordinate demands being placed on all institutions to address these evolving educational needs of mature students. Adult educators must therefore expand their constituency and service base to this growing population of professionals, managers, and executives who must now address the provision of educational services for their colleagues, staff members, and employees at unprecedented levels. The opportunity exists within this new framework to broaden the base of institutional support for adult education which is of critical importance both politically and financially.

In this new world of continuous training it is more than likely that there will be a mainstreaming of continuing and adult education and that it will migrate to the core within institutions where that is not currently the case. What will happen to it then? A possible answer to this question may be found in community colleges which have historically been continuing education institutions *par excellence* in that part-time adult students constitute a majority of those attending. In these schools, credit programs for part-time adult learners have been merged with regular degree programs and placed under academic auspices other than those of continuing education. The latter often administer non-credit, non-degree programs, so that they are still not within the institutional mainstream. These relentlessly non-traditional bureaus continue to experiment with the unconventional, the untried, the interdisciplinary, and the risky. Were those units to be more like others in the mainstream, institutional innovation and opportunistic growth could be placed at risk. Yet, the separation of credit programs from the *oeuvre* of these units is questionable since they are the repository of considerable expertise in meeting the needs of adult students.

Creativity and Continuing Education

Authors on creativity find the concept of marginality critical to the development of new perspectives which is a prime source of creative innovation, especially being able to see problems from other angles (Edelson and Malone, 1999). Identifying opportunities where others fail to see them, and then having the ability to act, often against the grain of established custom, does not come easy to those inextricably tied up in the fabric of convention. By contrast, being iconoclastic and free from normally accepted constraints, a feature of marginality, encourages one to improvise and fashion alternative solutions. Being on the *boundary* also facilitates *boundary spanning*, and thereby sample and explore the cultures of other systems and their ways of doing things. This may help explain why the field of continuing education has been a rich source of innovation in American

education: summer school, night school, part-time programs, career education, women's programs, programs for other specialized constituencies including minorities, the disadvantaged, the foreign born, portfolio evaluation, credit for life experience, correspondence and distance education, the broader concept of open learning -without doubt the most dynamic contemporary dynamic in education- all of these innovations originated in the field of continuing adult education.

Being different and going against the grain, often standing apart, if not in opposition to the main stream, and experiencing exclusion and the inevitable feelings of alienation from the majority is another facet of the creator's world, and is often the price paid for what is often a long delayed success. The special buffering from nay-sayers, that creativity requires constitutes an argument in favor of separate units of continuing education which can function as *safe havens* for educational creativity. The fact that most continuing education programs are, using Kowalski's model, in Types B through F institutions accounts for ongoing intra-institutional tensions between central or core priorities, and those which are less intrinsic, and peripheral.

The pervasiveness of this coloration of marginality has led continuing education leaders to seek justification for their programs in different forms of outcomes analysis. Kowalski identifies nine goals or motivators for a hypothetical computer literacy course (p.154) based upon an examination of program plans developed by continuing education administrators. It is not surprising that profit making leads the list, since that is the most easily recorded, understood, and valued by those who do not subscribe to the value structure of adult education. This conclusion is also shared by Clark.

It would be the rare continuing education bureau that did not locate its *raison d'être* in some form of resource generation; although fee generated revenue must certainly lead the list. Other objectives are meeting the learning goals of participants, the cultivation of external constituencies, especially elites, and influencing the development of society.

Houle, in his seminal book The Inquiring Mind (1961) following a series of interviews with adult students, identifies three major goals for adult learning. These are the acquisition of specific subject knowledge, satisfying a more diffuse love of learning, and a desire to be in the company of other adults. Although Houle's typology has become much more sophisticated and complex under the hands of other few seriously question Houle's findings for *adult liberal learning* which is the most "voluntary" sector of continuing education in the sense that the desire for learning emanates from within an individual, and is non-coercive as the term is generally understood. This is in contrast with vocational/occupational adult learning which can often be mandated by employers, or may be necessitated by changes in the workplace. The rapid growth of *corporate universities*, a topic for further exploration in this monograph, accentuates the heightened priority of workplace based training to organizational productivity.

Before concluding this section, three questions are posed, the answers to which strongly suggest the direction of future developments in institutionally based adult learning.

- 1) Will all competitive organizations promote continuing education for their members?
- 2) Within these organizations, will continuing education become more important each year?
- 3) Will a greater proportion of organizational resources be allocated to continuing education?

Based upon current trends and directions in the United States, most readers would answer each of the above affirmatively. Is this a case of tunnel vision, or of those within the adult education field wishing for a future more favorable to their own activities? Also, the counterintuitive nature of human events argues strongly against naively projecting out existing trend lines. In truth, we never know the future and are often surprised by unforeseen innovation. For individuals, it is unlikely that responses would differ in terms of personal reinvestment of resources for their skills development. Greater opportunities abound, especially for self-directed learners. Yet, a recent study in Canada (Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, 1999) documented a decrease in continuing education enrollments during a period of economic recession. One hypothesis is that if adults do not perceive that employment opportunities exist, they will not make an investment in employment related learning. A similar relationship was noted on Long Island, NY, during a comparable period of economic decline. The persistence of situational and dispositional barriers to adult education participation are also not to be denied (see Cross, 1983). On the other hand, the rapid spread of computers now estimated to be in 50% of American households (and over 90% in the workplace); the continued innovation within that field of technology, have all created an almost universal need for continuing education. Earlier predictions that once people were trained and became "computer literate" their computer continuing education needs would be satisfied did not prove true. Instead, constant computer innovation has created a dynamic cycle of perpetual training within each occupational area touched by this and related communications technologies. Moore's Law postulates that the performance of microprocessors doubles every year, while the price is halved. Both trends contribute to the spread of computers wherever human ingenuity can find ways to creatively use them (see Negraponte, 1995).

Additionally there are other forms of innovation resulting from new knowledge discoveries in bio-technology, materials science, transportation, in short, across the entire realm of human knowledge. While it is tempting to think of our present decade as one of unusual knowledge explosion, this phenomenon will be of far greater duration. This quickening pace of innovation and the need to keep current will affect all adults throughout their earning lives. It is ubiquitous, because of worldwide competitive tendencies. Where is there a field within the United States that is effectively shielded from modernization and the competitive environment which is concomitantly fostered? Rifkin (1995) writes about the spread of automation up from the shop floor to the management suite and the resulting dislocations in the workplace. The globalization of industry and the growing scale of economic organization transcend national geographic borders unless protective barriers to trade are erected. These seem unlikely within the current international monetary framework which is creating new normative standards more felicitous to the worldwide flow of capital and the operation of multinational corporations with multiple geographic bases. Surely the training industry and the profession of adult education are well positioned to help manage the transition to a future of lifelong education.

Cultural and Historical Roots for American Adult Education

Self-Improvement

The development of American adult and continuing education demonstrates several major themes or facets. There is the larger contextual background of *self improvement* which I call the Franklinian tradition, after Benjamin Franklin, printer, inventor, statesman, founder of the Junto (a voluntary association for self-improvement), and also the University of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society, signer of the Declaration of Independence which he helped draft and so on. A distinguishing feature of America, noted by De Tocqueville, has been the pervasive faith people hold in their ability to rise through their own

efforts. This is typified in the career of Franklin and the mythology surrounding it, especially the *leitmotifs* of humble origins, hard work, an insatiable appetite for learning, and experimentation. These themes are also found in the life of Thomas Edison, a century later, and in the pulp fiction written by Horatio Alger in the late 19th century. In his over 100 books he reinterpreted the Franklin/Edison saga for a burgeoning population on new immigrants more than eager to believe in the unlimited economic opportunity of America if only one were to work hard and live an exemplary life. The "boy inventors" Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, both persistent school dropouts who changed the world, provide enough confirmation that the myth persists often enough to keep it alive. Franklin's Autobiography continues to be one of the most read books in American literature and at one time, in my own youth, it was compulsory reading for all New York elementary school children. Although our parents prevented us from flying kites during electrical storms, we were nonetheless expected to emulate Franklin's industrious, creative nature.

The cult of the individual and of individual responsibility, which ironically, though a force propelling adult education as "self improvement" and also "self help," has paradoxically stigmatized and undercut public support for second chance adult education. This is the very area most people, if asked to define *adult education*, would identify. This category includes remediation and literacy for "dropouts," programs for the unemployed, and other disadvantaged groups and "at risk" populations. Proponents of adult education have had to argue that these people are not morally flawed but instead constitute an extensive sometimes invisible cohort whom for various contextual, behavioral, or economic reasons could not avail themselves of publicly supported educational opportunity when it was first made available to them. An example might be a person forced to leave school to earn money to supplement the earnings of low wage earning parents. This justification pivots on factors of gender, race, class, and, more recently, vagaries of the global economy, rather than on intelligence and character.

The advent of large scale white collar and professional unemployment in the past decade as a result of global production and marketing transformations has been an entirely new phenomenon in the post World War II industrialized west. The existence of this population of previously successful middle class, middle aged, and often middle management, group of dislocated college educated workers gave a new "professional" face to second chance adult education. The high level of success in getting this group back to work (80% in some programs) provided a public "proof" of the value of adult education for mainstream middle class populations who did not carry the baggage of discrimination or of being disadvantaged. A similar success had been previously achieved with programs targeted towards middle class women who were re-entering the labor market.

In this manner, adult education for the dislocated professional and for re-entry women has removed some of the tarnish from second chance adult education, so much so that we are in danger of the other extreme, that of too high expectations, as various welfare-to-work programs incorporating mandatory adult education are hatched. Unrealistic objectives for re-educating the hard-core unemployed may revive the explanation of personal and group failure, taking the burden off poorly conceived and/or delivered programs.

No discussion of *self-improvement* as a force in American adult education would be complete without mentioning the extension traditions of Oxford and Cambridge which in the 19th century offered another model, this time tied to university outreach, for *liberal adult education*. This was later to evolve into adult education within the "genteel tradition" for middle class gentlemen and women seeking to add polish and refinement to their lives. Liberal adult education as a type of personal upgrading was thought to lubricate upward social mobility. In fact, for many years, especially the twenty year period of 1950-1970, liberal

learning for adults was almost synonymous with American continuing education and could well have been a general descriptor up until recent years. Programs in adult education in all institutional sectors still abound with courses on art, music, dance, and literature appreciation and it is unlikely that they will disappear, regardless of the onslaught of new computer software editions. Programs for the retired, which will be addressed later, have become the true redoubt of liberal arts adult education since this population is more concerned with quality of life issues as opposed to success in the workplace.

Colonial Evening Schools.

Seybolt (1925) traces the evolution of the evening school in the American colonies from their earliest inception. Offering instruction in the practical trades and applied sciences, they were a regular feature of life in the cities where employment opportunities were readily available. Privately owned, they provided training on a fee-supported basis. As such, they represented the importance and connection between acquiring knowledge and skills for employment in the developing industrial economy which could not be addressed through either apprenticeship or autodidactic measures. Thus part-time education for adults, self-financed, and provided at times convenient for the learner, often evenings, have been an ongoing feature of this society for over two centuries. It would be fair to say that this institution of night or evening schools for adults has persisted with little change, except for that of number, scale and complexity. In fact, these privately financed schools, now commonly referred to as the *proprietary, or profit making*, sector have been notable for their persistence and enthusiasm, and especially for staying competitive in the adult education marketplace.

Progressivism

Another major force influencing American adult education is the Progressive Education Movement, which according to Cremin (1961) extended from 1876, the year of the Philadelphia Centennial, to 1957, the year Sputnik was launched. The crucible of Progressive Education was the Progressive Movement in American politics which was also a late 19th century phenomenon that continued well into this century, which evolved into democratic liberalism. The core of this philosophy was that governments existed to help people through tackling and resolving social and economic problems. The social sciences, especially economics, political science, and sociology were viewed within this context as modern analytical tools for determining what needed amelioration as well as the methods, which were often educational in nature. Progressivism drove home the message that through education society could improve and renew itself. Within continuing education, the progressive spirit became the nucleus of a robust public service outreach mission that envisioned the upward evolution of society through the broader distribution of educational services and opportunities.

The most visible manifestation of this connection for adult education, especially continuing higher education, was "The Wisconsin Idea" articulated by Charles Van Hise, President of The University of Wisconsin in his 1904 inaugural address. The famous concept repeated hundreds if not thousands of times by continuing educators and other socially conscious educators and popularly paraphrased as "the borders of the State of Wisconsin are the borders of the University" presents an activist outreach interpretation of higher education's role that is a far cry from the university as "ivory tower." The Wisconsin Idea coupled research, teaching, and real world problem solving.

Ground for this position at Wisconsin was established in the Morrill Act (1862) which set aside public land on behalf of state universities whose missions were to improve agriculture and the mechanical arts, and the decision by the Wisconsin Board of Regents in 1885 to establish short courses for adults not interested in entering credit programs. Thus, General Extension, as it developed, had two

major axes: off-campus credit (or degree instruction), and the not-for-credit short course.

As a consequence of their locations, often in the geographic center of a state, the state universities in America had major off-campus, and what we would now call distance learning obligations giving a very literal interpretation to the term "university extension." These were originally addressed by means of traveling faculty, then through correspondence, and now by a host of electronic means including radio, television, and computer. The need to bring order and standardization to this credit, degree oriented extension work was a major *raison d'être* for the creation of college and university level continuing education departments (Edelson, 1991). Short non-credit courses, by comparison, were practical applications of university research and expertise. They were organized on a self-financing basis, thereby establishing a funding pattern of self-support for adult education that continues to this day.

Short courses are highly variable in nature and can embrace one day symposia as well as programs with multiple meetings held over several months. The introduction of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) in the 1970's however made possible some standardized accounting for continuing education non-credit programs. This was of inestimable value to professions requiring continuing education as a basis for relicensure. One CEU is defined as "ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction." (NUCEA, 1974, p.iii). The CEU, as a standardized accounting measure for continuing education, has helped in the convergence of non-credit and credit instruction paving the way for a common educational currency which is sure to emerge in the not too distant future.

Other features of educational progressivism that have become integrated with American adult education and its world-view are a student centered approach to learning, a developmental view of the student as "person," seeing learning as problem-solving, a perspective of the classroom as a platform for social change especially modeling the ideal world of the future, and the role of the teacher as much broader than dispensing information but as an educational innovator and experimenter.

Urbanism

University Extension as it has just been described- distance education and short courses- was primarily the world of large state universities in rural and ultimately "college town" locations. The *metropolitan* experience was usually quite different. Since the 18th century there had been, as previously noted, a tradition of colonial evening schools in New England and the eastern American cities offering instruction in commercial and technical subjects. It is correct to see Evening Divisions within 20th century urban universities as being part of this history of part-time, after-work, education. Full blown Evening Colleges in the 20th century came to resemble "shadow" versions of the daytime collegiate enterprise offering degrees, both undergraduate, graduate, and professional, sometimes in astonishing variety and depth. In addition to part-time students, they also enrolled those who could not gain admission to the day school. This population tended to enroll full-time at night and was demographically similar to their day counterparts.

As in the case of University Extension, Evening Colleges were also vulnerable to the criticism of "soft pedagogy" and the litany of tired students, tired faculty, and second rate programs. Nevertheless insatiable student demand for higher education ensured the success of both of these experiments.

Education for Good Citizenship

This is another subset of programs historically rooted in American adult education. They have taken several forms including *Americanization* and have incorporated courses on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the responsibilities of citizens, and on American culture and values. The programs, which are offered free or at little charge to participants, were developed in response to the large increase in non-English speaking immigrants in the early part of the 20th century and continue today. They are often located in public schools or community centers which will also schedule for this population programs in *Literacy* and *High School Equivalency* or *GED*.

The High School Equivalency Diploma or *GED* was established in 1942 as a way of helping soldiers in the US military to continue their education. Since that time 12.6 million adults have earned their high school degree through taking the GED. In 1997 827,000 people took the test. Two thirds of these planned to continue their education beyond secondary school (ACE, 1998). This statistic underscores the importance of the emerging seamless system of part-time and full-time education in the USA. With a GED or high school degree one can progress to post-secondary schooling at either a two year or four year college. Articulation agreements throughout all sectors of American education have made it possible for adults whose education was interrupted at almost any stage, to find a way back into the system and not remain permanently bypassed. Yet, the existence of these conduits should not be misconstrued to mean that adult drop-outs who drop back in have the same degree of choice as those who persist along conventional or traditional routes. The situation, though far from being ideal, still constitutes a major stride towards lifelong educational enfranchisement.

From 1951-1961, during the Cold War, the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education embarked upon an ambitious plan to strengthen democratic values among the middle class. The Fund's President, Robert Maynard Hutchins, former President of the University of Chicago, initiated an array of liberal adult education programs including a Great Books Discussion Program which explored Western intellectual traditions. In other courses students, using materials developed at universities, discussed foreign policy and urban planning issues. Both types of programs emphasized "critical thinking" which was viewed as fundamental to good citizenship within a democracy. The resources and prestige of the Ford Foundation enabled it to have considerable impact on the development of American adult education.

In addition to cold war phobias, the Ford Foundation was concerned about the proper use of leisure time, and extending high culture to the masses. The Fund for Adult Education is directly responsible for mainstreaming liberal adult education on a self-supporting, pay-as-you-go, basis within American continuing higher education (Edelson, 1992b). With this theme of self-enrichment we come full circle with that of self-improvement described at the outset of this section.

Contemporary Trends

Turning to the contemporary period of the past twenty years, we see the continuation of earlier threads but with several new twists.

The Workplace. The centrality of the workplace for adult learning is a result of the synergy of three related forces: individual, corporate, and national competitiveness. Instability in the workplace and in individual careers have fueled an upward spiral of occupationally related continuing adult education.

The Individual. Computerization, or informatizing, of the workplace probably accounts for the greatest proportion of continued learning in the USA today.

There appears to be no end to this phenomenon with newer versions of software, machine upgrades, a greater number of tasks being given over to computers as computational power increases by leaps and bounds. The developments in this area have surprised everybody, including those within the field of information technology. We are on an accelerating learning curve ourselves. And the opportunities for training others and learning new computer applications, in both work and education, seem, at this time, without end. Whereas most corporate training conducted by universities as continuing education has historically been in the areas of management and general professional development, computer training has become a ubiquitous and substantial product line. I think it would be impossible to find a continuing education division in the United States without its own computer training labs.

Business and industrial expansion have also provided incentives for employees to embark on skills and credential-related education, for degrees and certificates, and to fill the new jobs created by economic growth. Additionally, the volatility of the job market and the structural obsolescence of some occupational ranks, especially in middle management and in technical areas being taken over by the computer, have placed a premium upon continued training as a hedge against premature and unwanted retirement. The skewed distribution of economic rewards within organizations based upon the acquisition of specialized high level skills has also sharpened internal competition and created incentives for continuing education.

Corporate Competitiveness. Staff investment is now understood as the key to a winning corporate strategy. The prevailing management *zeitgeist* is "the learning organization" and the importance of intellectual capital for corporate innovation. Increasingly employees are seen as the real corporate resource. Tom Peters, in The Circle of Innovation (1997) urges administrative leaders to make staff units the vital *centers of intellectual capital accumulation* rather than the *prime source of corporate drag*. The pace of technological change is so fast that traditional command and control management structures that are rigidly hierarchically based are ineffective and even enfeebling in identifying opportunities for growth. For an entrepreneurial culture to thrive, the locus of action is, as Peters, Drucker, and others have observed, the individual and the small work group. Continued learning is an intrinsic part of this culture. (See Senge, 1990)

During the recent recession of the early 1990's, wave after wave of corporate downsizing resulted in a environment where workers had to perform more tasks, and thus had to expand their knowledge bases through continuing education. With economic recovery came the realization that the way to retain good employees and not lose them to the competition was through offering opportunities to learn, grow, and develop new skills. Thus, in scenarios of both economic decline and growth continuing education has become a value added commodity.

Nell P. Eurich (1985, 1990) was one of the first scholars to draw serious, systematic attention to the investment made by the corporate sector in workplace adult education. In 1985 it was estimated that expenditures for business-based education ranged from \$40 billion upward "approaching the total annual expenditures of all of America's four-year and graduate colleges and universities. And the number of employees involved in corporate education may equal the total enrollment in those same institutions- nearly 8 million students." (1985, p. ix). By 1990 Eurich's estimate was revised to "around \$60 billion" (1990, p.18) for formal classroom training omitting the wages of employees while they studied. But according to a study by SRI International, if informal on the job training is included, more than \$200 billion is annual expended. The SRI study (cited in Eurich, 1990, p.18) found that 70% of the retraining of the American workforce takes place in corporate education and training programs. The American Society for Training and Development placed the number of students

served in 1989 as 14 million! (Eurich, 1990, p.18). The *Corporate University* movement, to be explored later in these pages, is the most vibrant expression of corporate America's commitment to the continued education of its workers.

Eurich notes the increased allocation of training resources to production workers and blue-collar employees (1990, p.19) bringing them to the level of senior managers in terms of formal training. She ascribes this development to the need to technologically empower these workers at a higher level in order for them to raise productivity still further. She correctly recognizes that the continuing education opportunities now available at work will undoubtedly take place throughout a person's career, in some cases four decades or even longer, contrasted with the much shorter period of conventional school-based education. Thus the potential impact of corporate based education is quite significant and deserving of further analysis.

For those within academic adult education, the corporate sector may be something of a closed, largely opaque world. The need for secrecy and to shield operations from corporate competitors as well as an established tendency to use consultant/trainers who have come out of industries closely to those wherein they consult have historically limited academic involvement. To this add the widely held belief that university experts are out of touch with real world concerns, especially for corporations to realize economic returns on corporate training investments, and the focused goals of adult learners have led to diminished requests for academic services. In lieu of university trainers, and in addition to consultants, the business world relies heavily upon professional associations which specialize in various content areas (accountancy, computeracy, engineering), and more often on their own in-house training capacity.

National Productivity. The acceptance of the global marketplace, the mobility of capital, and the experience of losing business, especially manufacturing, to offshore competitors have painfully reminded political leaders of the reality of sudden economic collapse. The federal position in the USA is to help foster a climate conducive to industrial expansion, one of the components of which is continued learning in the workplace. The recent implementation of the Hope Scholarship, an annual tax credit for individuals of up to \$1,500 for continuing education, increases the likelihood of employees investing in their own economic development. The tax credit takes the form of a direct deduction from any federal income tax's owed so it constitutes an actual cash saving to individuals and their families. This is the first national initiative aimed towards the middle class and can have a very broad national strategic impact. It represents a change from perceiving adult education as "remediation" for at risk groups. On the other hand, some educational benefits at work have lost their tax exempt status, so there has been reversal too.

The joining of these workplace factors has focused greater attention on the importance of organized lifelong learning as a permanent fixture of modern life. The palpable value of continuing education requires no further argument since it is based on economic reality and not morality in contrast with former appeals. In addition to Adam Smith's "invisible hand" we can now add Microsoft's new software releases.

Partnerships for Industrial Growth. One of the most interesting features of the continuing education landscape is the emergence of new forms of corporate partnerships often involving multiple businesses and catalyzed by a higher education institution. Increasingly the specialized nature of training requires companies to join with others to achieve a critical mass of participants and to spread costs over a larger number of organizations. Universities have helped crystallize these very dynamic working partnerships bringing to the table

knowledge of funding opportunities, grant writing know-how, and a level playing field that is open to all. For example, the University of California at San Diego's CONNECT program grew out of a deliberate process of dialogue with business and industry, regional planners, venture capitalists, and university leaders. It has 650 company members, an annual budget of \$1.5 million and has stimulated parallel programs across the country (Walshok, 1999). A comparable program at the State University of New York at Stony Brook created a network of electronics/aviation manufacturers and suppliers to win the largest group supplier grant from the New York State Economic Development Corporation in 1998. The ability to parley these cooperative relationships into more complex iterations such as business incubators and industrial development zones propels university continuing education divisions into becoming active agents of economic recovery and revitalization.

SECTION II DYNAMIC AREAS OF PRACTICE

The Corporate University Movement

The intersection of education and the workplace has found its fruition in the rapid spread of the corporate university concept. One of the earliest examples of this phenomenon was McDonald's Hamburger University whose goal was to "drum into managers" its manufacturing approach to fast food (Eurich, 1990, p.165). The unusual coupling of "hamburger" with "university" drew further attention to McDonald's commitment to its corporate goals, if not the lofty expectations it expected of its Human Resource Development (HRD) division repositioned as an intended college-level training provider. While we may question whether the level of corporate education can be improved with simply the change of title and plaque, the implementation of a higher education mindset has moved in-house education away from indoctrination and the extensive use of mandatory standardized curricula towards a more intellectually ambitious agenda.

According to one estimate there are currently more than 1,000 American corporate universities compared with 400 in 1988. This number is projected to exceed 2,000 by the year 2000 (Meister, 1998). Eurich (1990, p. 165) who used the term "corporate academies" to describe these enterprises saw them as "here to stay" (p.166). She viewed them as more than simply expressions of corporate ego, and instead as a means for reliably delivering specialized adult education, other approaches having proved themselves inadequate. The fast pace of change in the corporate world has engendered a need for continuous, open ended, small group, employee directed learning. This is in contrast to rote learning of limited fixed curricula deployed on a large scale. Meister (1998) refers to the corporate university as a process (p.6) and as a way to increase the knowledge capital of the organization, "a process in which employees partner with members of the value chain-customers, suppliers, and wholesalers- to build individual and organizational competencies that increase the performance of the organization" (p.6).

Corporate universities differ from training departments which tend to be "reactive, decentralized, and geared to a wide audience, typically conveying functional information with little depth in a classroom environment in which courses are structured with a start and a finish." (P.6). Conversely, corporate colleges are proactive, centralized, with customized curricula. They address more intellectually complex subjects such as the intangible skills of leadership, creative thinking and problem solving strategies. Employing multiple learning technologies such as classrooms, independent self-paced instruction, and distance learning, sometimes bringing together in the virtual classroom students from different corporate sites. There is an emphasis on lifelong learning as a means of fostering the ongoing continuous development of skills and knowledge. The specific technical knowledge of students is also addressed in an attempt to offer curricula that is notable for breadth as well as depth.

In the best of the corporate universities, the adoption of collegiate terminology and structure is meant to communicate a seriousness of purpose and commitment to academic values. An excellent example is Symbol University (SU), the corporate college of Symbol Technologies, Inc., a high technology firm on Long Island (web site: <<http://edu.symbol.com>>) known for pioneering research and product development in computer bar code technology.

The corporate leadership of Symbol view the corporate university model as a strategy that "recognizes the need for consistency in course and curriculum development." (Symbol<<http://edu.symbol.com/orientation/mission.html>> 4/21/99). Acknowledging that corporate universities have become synonymous

with "quality, continuous learning and world class operations. The benefit to the student is quality education through a structured curriculum that allows for maximum proficiency in his/her job while preparing for career advancement." SU was recently named as one of the 100 best practice corporate universities in the country by Corporate University Xchange, a New York based firm providing consulting and support services to corporate universities.

The CEO of Symbol is the Chancellor of SU, with other senior corporate administrators holding the positions of President, Provost, Chief Learning Officer, and Dean (<http://edu.symbol.com/FandA/FandAContent04.html> 4/21/99). SU academic divisions are based upon corporate structure, viz.

Manufacturing/Operations, Business and Information Systems, Products and Technology, and Professional Development. An interesting feature of Symbol University are the cross divisional Learning Councils which are intended to address broad learning issues. For example, the Measurements and Standards Learning Council has as its objective developing measurements, standards, and reporting vehicles reflecting the quality of curricula, and the "overall value of education to the strategic goals of the corporation that should include, but not be limited to productivity/quality improvements and *financial impact*." (<http://edu.symbol.com/FandAContent0.4.html>>4/21/99)

Assessment, which in academia holds vague meanings must have greater precision in the corporate realm and consist of more than post course surveys conducted shortly after course completion. It is expected that SU will utilize sophisticated tracking of employees to determine their contributions to the organization and the actual output which can be attributed to the learning experience.

Much of the course work is conducted by computer-based self-study, or through distance learning computer conferencing. But there is also traditional classroom-based instruction. Curricula are developed by senior managers in consultation with area specialists within the company. In some situations, SU intends to partner with traditional universities to sponsor a degree program. Many administrative functions at SU are automated. Employees can log on to the "virtual campus," browse the catalogue, view course content and schedule, and then, using their company identification/student ID number, enroll.

Since employees are required to take at least 40 hours of course work annually, as a condition of continued employment, the stakes are high for both the individual and company in justifying the value of these activities. The focus on outcomes assessment could well lead to in-depth discussions on effective educational methodologies for lifelong learning. Members of the adult education profession may therefore have added opportunities to learn about and conduct research on assessment in this very new environment. The higher education community can also advise on articulation and collaborations with other educational, especially post-secondary, institutions.

A major question that must be asked is "are corporate universities merely another management fad, or will they be incorporated as regular features of organizational life?" Clearly, the support of top management is essential for all organizational innovations to persist and ultimately succeed. They must also achieve demonstrated success in achieving important institutional goals. Once the "bloom is off the rose" and corporate universities are no longer new, will management continue to support the extra expenses which are entailed in the corporate college experiment, especially if outcomes assessment are ambiguous? This is very much the case in other forms of adult learning. Chris Duke, writing in 1983 found no direct, unequivocal relationship between adult education and the reduction of poverty, although he felt that a preponderance of indirect evidence

supported that contention (Duke, 1983).

Meister notes a trend for corporate universities to partner with traditional universities to make corporate earned course credit transferable into conventional college programs. This is of considerable value to employees seeking educational credentials since a college degree, as almost every parent knows, can have significant impact on their child's annual income. Grubb's analysis of the earnings of males and females (1996, p.3) shows that a four year degree can account for an income 70% greater than for those with just a high school education. Even for adults with some college, there is a 13% gain in income.

Data from the US Census Bureau (1997, cited in UCEA, 1998, p. 16) provide comparable support for higher earnings directly related to educational levels attained. For example, in 1996 the man annual earnings of college graduates was \$36,980, nearly double of those completing high school.

As workplace learning achieves levels of higher quality, it will contribute to the trend of finding ways to convert non-credit into credit, thereby increasing access to the formal system of higher education. Some notable advances in this direction are described below.

PONSI. The National Project on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction was established by the New York Board of Regents as a result of a 1974 pilot study designed to determine if instruction emanating from noncollegiate institutions including businesses and industries, labor unions, professional and voluntary organizations, government agencies, hospitals, proprietary vocational schools, and other nondegree granting organizations, was at the college level. A comparable project was begun that same year by the College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT) of the Washington, DC based American Council on Education (ACE), an umbrella organization representing accredited colleges and universities in the USA.

National PONSI, though established in New York as a division of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, accredits courses nationwide. Since 1994 it has been conducted cooperatively with the California State University, the nation's largest senior institution of higher education. In 1999 close to 1,400 colleges and universities identified themselves as being open to awarding credit based upon PONSI recommendations. To illustrate the types of programs for college credit, a 100 hour Basic Teller course offered by the Dime Savings Bank of New York was recommended for three semester (credit) hours elective in lower division Business or Banking (PONSI, 1998, p. 126).

The second major national accrediting body for noncollegiate sponsored instruction is the College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT) of the American Council on Education (ACE). Almost 300 organizations have submitted courses to CREDIT for evaluation. And the recommendations for credit subsequently determined have been accepted by 600 higher education institutions nationally. CREDIT/ACE may be accessed directly by means of the Internet, demonstrating the ease of finding out about these services now possible (<http://www.Acenet.edu/calec/corporate/partic-univ-S.html>).

According to ACE, hundreds of thousands of employees have received credit in this manner through its CREDIT program which evaluates, using teams of college experts, courses based upon duration, objectives, and outcomes. Their findings recommend the amounts of credit and appropriate degree level, undergraduate or graduate. Another ACE program, the *Credit by Examination Service* evaluates individual exams and examination programs in terms of educational credit in order to ensure that the college credit awarded on the basis of test results is comparable to that students may earn through more traditional means.

Individuals who have earned college credits through either PONSI or CREDIT may take advantage of ACE's *Registry of Credit Recommendations* which serves as a centralized reporting and transcribing system for all student workplace education, including those qualifying for Continuing Education Units (CEU's) which was developed as a uniform system of measurement for non-credit instruction (NUCEA, 1974).

In these ways, a multitude of providers, not previously seen as part of the American higher education "system" are being integrated. The legitimization of their educational programs will make it increasingly possible for working, part-time, adult students to cross previously impenetrable boundaries separating the educated from the non-educated. The recognition of commonality between all high quality learning experiences can mitigate some of the disadvantages experienced by part-time learners in their quest for important educational credentials. In this context, the potential impact of programs like PONSI and CREDIT can be quite significant.

Higher Education

The inter-relationship of American higher education and the education of adults has been a feature of our system even during the Colonial period. Kett writes that the image of mid-eighteenth century collegians as "callow boys" (1994, p.13) is misleading in that many students were age 23 and older at graduation; at Yale it was nearly 30 percent by the end century's close. This had more to do with the ready pool of available students than with any special ministry to older adults. Regarding programs of study, often the distinction between regular and adult education was blurred, especially in the period prior to the Civil War (1861-65), when traditional curricula were largely based on student interests, and there was an absence of fixed mandatory programs. Under those circumstances, schooling in the antebellum college very much resembled that which could be found in the *urban clubs, mutual improvement societies, mechanics institutes, and literary societies* found in the seaboard cities. Within these institutions a belletristic curriculum of short, non-sequential, courses prevailed until well through the 19th century. It was commonly held belief that knowledge of arts and letters could help promote a person's fortune, regardless of occupation. The programs of study offered at these venues converged with highly popular auto-didactic forms of learning pursued individually.

Adult oriented subject material gained support from another direction as well. The Morrill, or Land Grant College, Act of 1862, establishing a tradition of technical education for children of workers, according to Kett indirectly led to the creation of courses for workers themselves (Kett, 1994, p.xiii). The Morrill Act provided federal support to schools that would "promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes" in the mechanical arts and agriculture (quoted in Kett, 1994, p. 126). Although not thought of as extension universities *per se*, the land grant colleges embraced the principle of colleges as "popular" institutions, with a public mandate. Ironically, the failure of these schools to attract sufficient numbers of undergraduate students caused them to turn aggressively through continuing education to the adult market as a way of filling classrooms and justifying public support. This, regrettably, continues to be the *leitmotif*, for the vast majority of traditionally focused colleges serving adults. It has become a lucrative side business, that is not core, except where it constitutes the sole focus of the enterprise. The proprietary or for-profit sector of higher education, by way of contrast, has made the adult market its "bread and butter."

GI Bill of Rights. Immediately following World War II, the colleges in the USA had a large exposure to adult students which was quite unexpected. Congress passed

the Serviceman's Readjustment Act in 1944. This became popularly referred to as the GI Bill and subsidized higher education and vocational training for over two million veterans who swelled college enrollments, especially at high prestige institutions, according to Horowitz (1987, p.185) who writes, "In 1948 at the University of Michigan, the undergraduate student body reached 20,000 of which 11,000 were veterans. In the three peak years from 1946 to 1948 veterans comprised the majority of all males in college."

Peter Drucker writing in Post-Capitalist Society (1993) considers the GI Bill to be a major transition or "divide" (p.1) signaling a sharp transformation from an earlier era ranking with the invention of printing, the steam engine, and the computer. Giving every returning American soldier the money to attend a university was "something that would have made absolutely no sense only thirty years earlier, at the end of World War I." For Drucker, the GI Bill of Rights, and the enthusiastic response to this legislation, "signaled the shift to the knowledge society. Future historians may well consider it the most important event of the twentieth century." (P.3)

The reasons for the Serviceman's Readjustment Act had more to do with fears that the peacetime economy would be unable to quickly absorb the returning American servicemen in sufficient numbers to avert large scale domestic instability. In fact, within American higher education, including adult education, there was widespread resistance to a governmental presence in American education. This was viewed as a possible "foot in the door" preceding other types of federal meddling in higher education. The war against fascism and now the cold war against aggressive communism sharpened the perception that totalitarian regimes sought to indoctrinate their subjects through control of education. America's democratic traditions of local state control took on an almost sacrosanct air. Government control was to be avoided at all costs. These feelings still prevail today and are a serious obstacle to educational reform at all levels, from kindergarten through university. For this reason, there is a decided preference for direct aid to students, as in the case of the GI Bill, rather than directly to institutions, which it is feared would lead to intrusive federal involvement. There was also a fear among opponents to the GI Bill that state supported public institutions would be in a better position to exploit this federal largesse to the detriment of private institutions. Neither of these fears proved valid and the adult education community in particular, came to see the success of the GI Bill as a vindication of adults as learners.

The ex-servicemen were quickly absorbed by the colleges who desired to move them in and out of school as quickly as possible. One of the ways of doing this was giving the GI's credit for learning while in the armed forces. This was accomplished by large scale use of the American Council on Education (ACE) credit evaluations mentioned earlier. Amy Rose (1989, p.214) writes however that while experience with the GI Bill showed that colleges could administratively adjust, they could not show equal academic flexibility and instead required that these war veterans conform to traditional course material. "There was no notion of permanently changing the college curriculum; instead the colleges saw the [ACE] evaluation process as a temporary measure taken to meet an emergency situation" and not as a permanent reform. Indeed, Frederick Rudolf's authoritative The American College and University: A History written in 1962 has not a single mention of the GI Bill which often is viewed, if at all, as special group social legislation and not as an extension of critical educational rights to adults. In fact, it is America's professional continuing educators who have kept the torch of adult education alive in higher education amidst a sea of indifference and competition for scarce institutional dollars.

Horowitz writes that veterans earned higher grades than civilians and this was unrelated to family background or prior educational attainment. The findings of

one study (p.185) attributed their superior school performance to motivation- they studied harder!

Continuing Higher Education. Scarcely a college or university in the USA has not responded to the demand for continuing higher education on the part of adults. As mentioned earlier, organized university extension received a major boost with the founding of the land grant colleges in 1862. Although there were a number of short lived bursts of coordinated outreach through the latter part of the 19th century, a major stride was made in 1915 with the founding of the National University Extension Organization (NUEA) composed initially of twenty-one colleges and universities (Edelson, 1991). Since renamed the University Continuing Education Association, the UCEA today boasts approximately 427 institutional members and over 1,700 individuals. Although composed of both publicly and privately supported schools, the origin of NUEA/UCEA was largely among the land grant colleges with large extension programs although private colleges have played a major role since its inception.

A comparable organization is the Association for Continuing Higher Education. ACHE had somewhat different origins- as the Association of University Evening Colleges (1939), which itself grew out of the Association of Urban Universities, founded in 1914. ACHE has approximately 1400 members in 600 different institutions, although there is considerable membership overlap between it and the UCEA. In the early years the focus of ACHE was the urban evening college or night school, but now has broadened as has that of the UCEA, although ACHE membership tends to be distributed more among the smaller, private institutions.

Both the UCEA and the ACHE serve as active organizing, lobbying, and professionalizing organizations for academic leaders in these sectors of adult education practice. Each publishes a rich and dynamic literature of journals, monographs, and studies, as well as sponsoring national and regional conference programs at the cutting edge of continuing higher education. Through their literature and workshops, innovations and timely updates on federal legislation are rapidly disseminated nationally. Information on the applications of computer technology to distance learning, new program development, collegiate policies favorable to adult and part-time students, overcoming situational and dispositional barriers to instruction on the part of students and institutions, faculty development, and the steady flow of knowledge about adult learners, their aspirations and accomplishments regularly emanate from the UCEA and ACHE. They serve as creative catalysts for the field, counteracting marginality, spanning boundaries between organizations, continuously increasing the knowledge base of continuing education practice across the country and internationally.

Part-time Students. Part-time students, those who take 75% of what institutions define as a full-time student load are the fastest growing segment in higher education according to Lifelong Learning Trends, a publication of the UCEA (1998, p.11) from which the following data are excerpted, except where noted. During the period of 1970-1997 the number of part-time students doubled growing from just under 3 million to an estimated 6.2 million, which is nearly half of the total national college enrollment. The growth of part-time student enrollments is at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In 1997, it constituted 33% of undergraduate enrollment and nearly 66% at the master's level. The increase in part-time enrollments, 1970-1997, was 125% compared with 44% for full-time enrollments. Drucker writes positively about the colleges that have been agile to seize the initiative in serving this burgeoning market (1986) which has served to off-set the national demographic decline of potential students in the 18-24 age range.

A majority of part-time students are women and the expansion of part-time

enrollments derived largely from this cohort. Between the period 1970-1995 the number of women enrolled in post-secondary education tripled from 1.2 million to 3.6 million; for men the increase was not as dramatic, from 1.5 million to 2.5 million. Among females, the most dynamic component of enrollment growth was among those aged 35 and older tracking their entrance in record numbers into the national labor force. In today's economy, women of necessity see themselves as both caregiver and breadwinner; under these circumstances part-time education is the only feasible approach for entry into those occupational areas showing the fastest growth. These, not surprisingly, require at minimum some college education and tend to be in the managerial, technical, and professional areas.

Most part-time students, over 88%, enrolled in credit programs seek degrees. This is not surprising since education credentials are essential to secure entrance to the better occupations. But even some college, according to Grubb (1996), has a pronounced positive impact on wage earning. Due to the lower costs at two year community colleges large numbers of adults, over 5 million, choose to do at least some of their cost work at this level. Since many part-time students come from low income families, tuition costs are a significant factor in determining where they will attend school. By way of comparison, the average annual undergraduate fees at all public colleges (1996) was \$2,277; at private institutions tuition and fees came to \$12, 537. Even though the reduced income of these students enables them to qualify for Pell Grants and other student-aid programs, these funds are still insufficient to permit full-time attendance. For these reasons, 83% of part-time undergraduates work while attending college.

More Americans are college educated than ever before. In 1997, college graduates numbered 41 million compared with 12 million in 1970. And since research on continuing education participation shows a positive relationship between level of schooling and taking adult education courses, the likelihood that lifelong learning will continue to increase is very good indeed. An interesting feature of this growth in college attendance is the expansion taking place within independent study programs. This is due to their highly flexible nature, often at a distance either through correspondence instruction, television, audio cassette, and computer assisted modes. For students having jobs necessitating extensive travel, or who work full-time, or at times and places inconvenient for traditional classes, independent venues may be the only way to earn degrees. A survey of independent study enrollments within UCEA member institutions shows this population swelling to almost 400,000 in 1994-95, an increase of 46% over the preceding ten years. As the availability of distance education options becomes increasingly widespread this segment of the adult population studying part-time, and also full-time, is sure to grow even more.

Community Colleges. In 1901, Joliet Junior College was founded with the help of William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago. Harper had a long commitment to adult education. Before joining Chicago, he was President of the Chatauqua Institution, the leading US experiment in adult learning during the 1870's and 1880's. Chatauqua, located in upstate New York, perfected the model of organized adult learning in the liberal arts and spawned scores of imitators nationwide. It began the innovation of college level residential "summer schools" and was instrumental in the continuing professional of education thousands of public school teachers. Harper also created the Extension School at the University of Chicago and worked hard to simplify admissions to college.

Today there are over 1,100 two year colleges in the USA enrolling 10.4 million students comprising 44% of the nation's undergraduates. The rapid expansion of this sector has been such that in the 1970's it was estimated that a new community college opened weekly! The average annual tuition of \$1,518 is certainly an attractive feature to prospective students since the great majority are

part-time (64%) and therefore are working to support themselves and their families. According to the American Association for Community Colleges (AACC), the source of these and additional two year college data (AACC, 1999), the average age of junior college students is 29, so the issue of juggling multiple personal responsibilities is very real.

Typically community colleges depend for their revenue on three major funding sources: the state, student tuition, and the local community. With the majority of funds therefore coming directly from students and the immediate locale, it is not surprising that community colleges have worked hard to establish a consumer orientation that is highly receptive to student and constituency needs. Non-credit courses, of varying formats and duration, in particular are a highly flexible educational delivery vehicle for these services. The AACC reports that almost half of community college students are in these non-credit short programs. Community college programs tend to prepare their older students directly for employment. A recent survey (AACC, 1999) of the most in-demand community college programs are in dental hygiene, manufacturing process technology, telecommunications technology, physical therapy, and nursing. Collaborative programs with business and industry, especially on-site training, help make the two year schools lifelong learning institutions *par excellence* and the closest to fulfilling organizational adult education commitments that are espoused in other sectors, but not as fully honored.

Public School and Community Adult Education

The upward drift of educational requirements for the modern job market has favored the ascension of community colleges, displacing public schools. When once a high school degree was normative for adults, and college attendance exceptional, adult education activity revolved around the public schools offering K-12 education. Moreover, the types of job-related training programs that were in the public schools, although at a much lower level of technology were entirely appropriate for the employment opportunities available in the pre-technology era. Yet, as some college attendance becomes the minimal educational floor for entry level jobs in mid-level occupations, the high school and its "shop" programs in carpentry, electronics, home making, printing, and similar "crafts" of necessity receded from the forefront of community adult career education and instead became the bastion of "hobbyists." . This was particularly surprising since adult education in the public schools was an extremely vital and dynamic area of practice through the 1960's. That is, up until the flowering of community colleges in the 1970's when the locus of action shifted.

It is important to note that the National Association of Public School Adult Educators (NAPSAE) was a preeminent force in American adult education, responsible for integrating at the state level adult education as a major educational service. While it could never command the resources of the K-12 sector, NAPSAE brought adult education to the fore in the minds of state officials. Some very important community development projects using adult education were initiated by NAPSAE in cooperation with the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education. Foremost among these was the "Saturation Project" in which adult education was a centerpiece of urban renewal efforts in a number of mid-size American cities (Edelson, 1992a). Even though the outcome of this endeavor was ambiguous, Test Cities was pivotal in the development of public liberal adult education in the USA. It was also a continuation of the Progressive impulse in American adult education. A contemporary variant of "Test Cities" is the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), a project of the Topsfield Foundation located in Pomfret Connecticut. The SCRC has sponsored community based study circle discussion groups on key national issues such as health care, foreign aid, race

relations, the American political system, and taxation to name just a few (Flavin-McDonald and Barrett, 1999). Another example is the Kettering Foundation's "National Issues Forums" which are on a larger scale; study circles, by comparison, are as the name implies, small group discussions in which the face-to-face exchange between neighbors is prized. Although SCRC draws inspiration from the contemporary Swedish study circles, its founder, Paul Aicher, was a participant in the Fund for Adult Education's projects in the 1950's.

The public schools, although not as significant as they once were, are still ongoing sources of low cost community education especially in the content areas of leisure education, English as a Second Language, literacy, and GED preparation. It is the rare school district which does not offer at least some courses in computer software operations, foreign language instruction, dance or home carpentry in addition to literacy training. Yet, even with the success of NAPSAE and the prestige and resources of the Ford Foundation, adult education in the public school, as in the four-year college and university, could be nothing more than an ancillary function, commanding little of the institution's resource base. Moreover, the need for a more complex infrastructure, especially in technology and the concomitant human capital required to facilitate training into the next millennium prepared the seed-bed for a new type of educational institution combining features of the local school district and the community college.

Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). The Board of Cooperative Educational Services, or BOCES, as it is popularly called, was created by the State of New York in 1948 by the state legislature to help school districts obtain and provide quality programs and services more cost effectively than each could do alone. There are 38 BOCES within the state helping individual districts avoid duplication as they pool funds, talents, and energies. Each BOCES is a regional educational collaborative that is an extension of its member school districts reflecting the type of program mix required in each locale. Costs are billed to the districts based upon their use of each service.

Beyond economies of scale and the ability of a BOCES to fund expensive technology and other capital intensive projects, their emphasis on community outreach and continuing education promotes the development of professional staffs knowledgeable about and skilled in adult education issues. In this way high standards of accountability are established within a climate that prioritizes community outreach. BOCES staff will also assist local school districts obtain additional state or federal funding for special initiatives. This is a vast improvement over the former district level organization for adult education which seldom went beyond the most rudimentary staffing levels of a director, often a teacher earning a salary supplement for evening adult education supervision, and a secretary. Compared with these conditions, the BOCES approach in which adequate capital and professional expertise converge represents a major milestone.

A typical BOCES will offer services in literacy and basic skills, career counseling, work preparation and job training, evening and weekend courses, and business/corporate services. The primary focus is the sub-collegiate job market incorporating, for example, the following areas: auto care, business computer technology, cosmetology, electronic service, facilities technician, medical secretary, nurse assistant, precision manufacturing, truck driving, and welding. The preceding list is abstracted from the Monroe BOCES (<http://www.adulted.org>). It is interesting to note that many of these adult programs previously were the exclusive domain of the proprietary, or for profit sector. The success of these privately run career schools in addressing the post-secondary educational needs of adults is impressive, albeit at times controversial.

The use of regional delivery services like BOCES has become standard throughout most of the USA.

The Proprietary Sector and The Learning Business

The number of private, for profit, schools offering adult education in the United States numbered 3,614 in 1995 (Career Training Foundation, 1999, p. 8) with a projected enrollment of 1.1 million students (p.9). This is approximately 28 percent of the national full time equivalent (FTE) registration in all US postsecondary vocational programs, including community colleges.

These career schools tend to be urban, with an almost exclusive emphasis on vocational subjects. They are often small with an average enrollment of 350 compared with that of traditional colleges which is approximately 8,400. Research conducted by the Career Training Foundation of the Career College Association (CCA), a voluntary membership organization made up of 725 private, postsecondary schools and colleges which provide career-specific educational programs, indicates that private career colleges enroll a higher proportion of minority students than other postsecondary institutions (p.12). These students are often the first in their families to continue their education beyond high school. They also enroll a higher percentage of females. Career college students often come from families with lower incomes, and therefore have a greater degree of self-support than traditional students.

An organization comparable to the CCA is the New York based Association of Proprietary Colleges (APC). The 31 degree granting schools comprising the APC enroll approximately 30,000 students. Within the APC the Associates Degree is most commonly granted, although a handful of members offer Bachelors and Masters.

The proprietary sector is often viewed "suspicion and disdain" owing to the for-profit motive undergirding their existence. Critics believe that the needs of students are subordinated to stockholders, and the pursuit of truth, academic freedom, and professional academic standards are seriously at risk. By way of contrast, supporters of private schools maintain that because of the for-profit dimension, these institutions must be flexible, attuned to the needs of the marketplace and their students, and provide good value for the money.

Seaman and McDivitt (1989, p. 410) provide a four division classification composed of business schools, trade and technical schools, cosmetology schools, and home study schools. The number of these schools virtually tripled during the period 1976-1986 and there is no reason to assume that the pace has lessened due to the near universal implementation of new technology reshaping every occupational area. Another factor influencing the growth of private schools is that they will generally admit those lacking a high school diploma or equivalent.

Programs stress specific job skills objectives and are generally short term although certificate and two and four year degrees are offered by some career colleges. The schools maintain an unusually high commitment to job placement as an expected end product of program completion. Interestingly, the evolution of the public sector towards greater accountability has stimulated it to adopt these features as well. Although the private sector as a rule charges more than public institutions offering comparable programs, the proprietary colleges are administratively nimble and can develop programs very rapidly. Their close ties with employers also tends to give them a competitive edge in job placement. Hence it is very unlikely that they will disappear. In fact, it is in the combination of understanding their market, especially the job focused needs of adult learners, and the emerging contours of the 21st century workplace, where they have excelled so much so that they are fast becoming a legitimate alternative to

traditional institutions, both public and private. And this is at the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate levels.

Those of us in adult education in America have had precious few illusions about education as a business. Our portion of higher education has always been more dependent upon fee generation and self-support than others. But now all arenas of higher education, with the erosion of state funding, have migrated in this direction with a greater sensitivity towards delivering the right product at the right price within a competitive marketplace characterized by fewer entrance barriers. In the case of the proprietary sector, this can also mean generating a profit for shareholders.

University of Phoenix. The University of Phoenix is the best example of this new breed of for-profit institutions. Accredited only 20 years ago it boasts over 53,000 degree seeking students in 1998 (a growth of 30% compared with the prior year), exceeding New York University's 35,000 and Brigham Young's 32,000 making it the largest private university in the USA. It offers associate, bachelor, and masters degrees primarily in business and fields like information technology, health, and education at its nearly 70 campuses and learning centers located in thirteen states, Puerto Rico, and British Columbia. The faculty is over 5,200 teaching in both conventional and electronic online modes. Phoenix accepts no one under the age of 23 and only those gainfully employed. According to one observer "Phoenix is tapping into an exploding and lucrative portion of a \$200 billion higher-education market where costs have been widely seen as out of control." (Bronner, 1997)

Tuition at Phoenix is about \$6,500 per year which although exceeding the average for public institutions (in-state average of \$2,277) is still considerably less than most privates. (\$12, 537). Costs are controlled by reliance on an almost exclusively part-time faculty, use of electronic libraries, and no physical plant to speak of; Phoenix leases space on an as-needed basis in office buildings. But it is not just reasonable fees which make Phoenix attractive to adult learners. Its appeal and success is based on understanding what adult students want and then acting upon this knowledge.

Research conducted by Levine and Cureton (1998) on a representative sample of over 9,000 undergraduate students, including focus group meetings, and interviews with 270 chief student affair officers revealed a student population more concerned with customer service, convenience of use, low cost, and straight-forward predictable curriculum without surprises. In short, while quality is still important, students expect to find the same qualities in higher education which they find elsewhere in their consumer culture: convenient, on-demand higher education, priced right, without the frills (clubs, sports, pastoral campuses) their busy lives prevent them from enjoying. From this consumer perspective, Levine and Cureton write, these students are the prime candidates for alternative approaches, especially distance education, which is independent of rigid time and site based learning. Older, working students in particular, see time as the major adversary; as they try to shoehorn a higher education into fragmented, hectic lives.

The typical Phoenix student, according to J. Jorge Klor de Alva, the institution's President, is approximately 35 years old, has an annual family income of over \$60,000, and has worked for approximately 13 years. Phoenix tailors its degree programs to this population with a practical oriented, applied curricula, taught by faculty who work within the content fields they teach. Classes enrolling no more than 20 students meet one night a week or on weekends, for a five or six week period. There are also small study groups which are mandatory. Only one course may be taken at a time; Phoenix maintains that this "total immersion" approach

enhances learning. Courses follow a fixed sequence for each degree, so it is possible for part-time students to move through together as a cohort, a feature here-to-fore lacking in most part-time adult degree programs. Interestingly, all Phoenix degrees and courses are standardized so that students whose jobs require them to relocate, may continue their educations without having to re-enroll at a new institution with differing degree requirements. By rationalizing and subsequently simplifying the design and delivery of higher education to such a great extent Phoenix has come close to creating a new national education brand, in the same way that McDonald's perfected the hamburger and hamburger restaurant, within the reach of a sizable market. Observers believe that while elite colleges and universities are not at risk, there are many other undistinguished regional institutions that could definitely lose market share to Phoenix and its imitators. Levine's and Cureton's research showing that a great number of students care less about the prestige of faculty and more about the ease of earning their degrees in preparation for employment suggests that the University of Phoenix has tapped into a burgeoning spirit of vocationalism, shorn of unwanted academic trappings.

Although other universities have tried to compete with Phoenix for adult students they have not been as successful. Adult education far from being a university stepchild is all that Phoenix does. Since 1994 shares have been publicly offered on the Nasdaq Exchange (Apollo Group). Starting at \$2 per share, in October 1997 they traded at over 40. On September 17, 1998 the stock went as low as 24 in the wake of a Wall Street Journal article which raised doubts about the sustainability of long term growth. On June 9, 1999 Apollo traded at 29. Since Phoenix and other proprietary institutions exist to make money for their investors it remains to be seen what impact falling stock prices will have on their viability. Will students, in addition to perusing course catalogues, need to now also examine the balance sheets of their prospective colleges?

By way of contrast, the traditional university environment, especially in the public sector, thwarts attempts to function in a businesslike manner. The confluence of academia and government are stifling and breed conservatism. It has often been claimed that the university is the least changed of all contemporary institutions over the past 500 years.

Yet there is grudging acceptance that universities must move in the direction of the proprietary sector and integrate some marketplace values. Most disturbing in this metamorphosis is the growing reliance on student tuition to fund higher education within the public sector, where previously tuition was kept low as a matter of social policy. As tuition increases, how will this limit access to higher education? And what about the theme of self-improvement? Using the marketplace as a filter will have very serious consequences, especially as it erodes perceptions of opportunity for the less well-off.

Distance Education, Technology and Virtual Universities

It would be unthinkable to write a monograph on adult education in the USA without looking at the rapid growth of virtual universities, a phenomenon unforeseen a decade earlier, and underestimated as little as five years ago. A major dividend of the computerized workplace has been the application of electronic communications technology to entertainment, consumer activity, and, more importantly for our purposes, to learning. Perhaps because each wave of educational technology has been relentlessly oversold by its advocates, the striking success of computer and internet learning comes as something as a surprise. After crying "Eureka" so many times, technophiles and distance learning advocates finally have a product and delivery system that lives up to the expectations of students and faculty with respect to the two-fold requirements of flexibility and rigor. Yet, this new technology is merely the latest layer in

American outreach and distance education.

Distance Education. The U.S. Department of Education published its first national study of distance higher education in 1998 using data collected in 1995 from a representative sample of two year and four year colleges (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/distance/>) which were weighted to provide national estimates. Because of rapid strides made in computer and internet based learning in the past several years, participation in this area is undoubtedly low when compared with what it must be in 1999. Yet the study provides invaluable benchmark data which will be of inestimable value in establishing future trend lines. For the purposes of the study distance education was defined as education or training courses delivered to remote or off-campus locations via audio, video, or computer technologies. In addition to gathering data on present conditions, the survey asked respondents to project their distance education activities for the next three years. The USA had approximately 3,700 colleges and universities in 1995/96, the closest year to the distance education study for which these numerical data were available (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=21>).

The following is a summary of highlights from the government report. A third of higher education institutions offered distance education courses in fall 1995, another 25% planned to do so in the next three years, and 42% did not offer and did not plan to do so in the same three year period. Distance education is much more widely entrenched in public institutions than in private, with 58% of public two year institutions and 62% of four year schools. The respective percentages for private institutions is 2% of two year schools and 12% of four year colleges.

An estimated 25,730 different distance education courses were offered by higher education institutions in the 1994-95 academic year studied. About half the schools participating in distance education had ten or fewer courses. Eighty-four percent of the courses were scheduled by either public four year or two year institutions. The most popular format were two-way interactive video (57%), one-way pre-recorded video (52%), two-way audio, one-way video (24%), and computer-based technologies other than two-way online interactions during instruction (22%). Two-way online interactions accounted for 14%.

When institutions were asked about their target audiences for distance education, professionals seeking recertification (39%) and other workers seeking skill updating and or retraining (49%) were identified most frequently. Public four year colleges were more likely to target these audiences. Three-quarters of the schools offering distance education programs developed their own materials; 30% obtained them from outside vendors, commercial or non-commercial. There were an estimated 753,640 students formally enrolled in US distance education courses in academic year. This was out of a total number of 14.3 million USA higher education students, 1994-1995, or approximately 5%. Fifty-five percent of these distance education students were in two-year institutions and 31% in 4 year colleges. The study estimated that students could choose from among 690 exclusively distance education degrees and 170 certificates in fall of 1995. The most complete compendium of these and other distance learning programs is Peterson's Guide (1999). An estimated 3,430 students received degrees by taking distance education courses exclusively.

Looking ahead to the future, about half to 75% of the institutions which already offer, or plant to offer, distance education either expect to start them or expand them in the next three years. This same subset of institutions either plan to start or increase their usage of two-way interactive video, two-way online computer based technology or other computer-based modalities for their distance education

offerings. In projecting ahead, computer based technologies, especially two-way interactive and web based learning, are the emerging vehicles of choice.

Internet Learning. The Internet places vast educational opportunities at our fingertips including enrolling in college courses and earning entire degrees on line. It is startling to witness how rapidly this feature of contemporary educational life has been integrated to the point where it is no longer seen as revolutionary. This is owing to the continuous, seamless, evolution of distance learning which has never failed to adapt successive advances in communications and transportation technologies: horseback, the auto, correspondence, radio, television, audio and video cassettes, film strips, satellites, microwave and fiber optic transmission of data, and now the use of the computer. Taught within an asynchronous learning environment internet courses are becoming the distance learning venue of choice for working adults even though correspondence and video courses, supported by email continue to find a market. Two-way video using telephone lines, in particular, is showing impressive vibrancy since it is very compatible with corporate learning where there is a defined cohort of students all attending class at the same time. In this type of teaching, by way of contrast with the asynchronous mode, the model of teaching is the traditional one, or *synchronous*, with a faculty member lecturing to a class of students, albeit there is usually extensive media support.

It is important to realize that internet learning takes place within both a broader and deeper context of electronic access to ever expanding data-bases composed of university and national libraries, scholarly journals, rare manuscripts, and perhaps more importantly, the possibility of international learning communities. The innovations of streamed video, and the most important feature, enhanced portability in laptops that shortly will include widespread direct wireless transmissions of data, will truly revolutionize access to learning worldwide. If we can overcome the barriers of physical separation, what is a remote zone when it comes to education?

In asynchronous instruction, the instructional model followed is more aligned with the discussion group or seminar, rather than the classroom based teacher-centric variant. Typically students will conduct all of their course work electronically, including registration, ordering of books and class materials, class work and submission of assignments. Prior to the beginning of the course, students will receive syllabi detailing all expectations. The instructor and students will log on independently, each on their own schedule, all addressing that portion of the course under review. The instructor's role is to keep the discussion moving along, to make critical comments, and to offer a synthesis at appropriate junctures. One observer has quipped that the teacher is no longer a "sage on the stage" but a "guide on the side." In most courses students are required to log-on from 3-5 times per week, for one hour each time. Instructors can monitor student participation and performance. The course size for asynchronous classes is fewer than twenty, 12-15 is probably normative. With the large number of electronic "conversations" that take place in electronic courses it is not surprising that students and faculty achieve a unusually high degree of academic intimacy.

Feedback from participants is favorable. Faculty find that intellectual rigor is attainable and that students can do work comparable in every way to what is customarily expected in traditional courses. Students value the flexibility, the direct interaction with student peers and faculty, and the personal responsibility that is inherent in electronic learning. Yet, some still miss the face-to-face contact and the group approach to learning common in a classroom. It is undeniable that these developments are expanding opportunities for thousands of adult students, both in the USA and worldwide. It is not unusual for students to combine traditional and electronic courses in creating their academic programs, enabling

them to accelerate their progress. And faculty are finding that teaching electronically affords a new way of thinking about their subjects. Throughout the United States a new class of institutions is emerging, the "virtual university," often consisting of pooled disparate courses and programs, and emanating from different institutions. Sometimes the state is the unit of organization as in the case of California (<http://www.california.edu>), Florida (<http://www.flcampus.org>), and Pennsylvania (<http://business.ship.edu/vu/>). But regional and national consortia are not unusual. In the West, Western Governor's University (WGU) is probably the best known, if not the most developed (<http://www.wgu.edu>). Its member states include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. In the South there is the Southern Regional Electronic Campus (<http://www.srec.sreb.org/>) and is an affiliation of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma (also in WGU), South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Mid-west consortium counts the University of Chicago, plus the following schools: Indiana University, Michigan State University, Northwestern, Pennsylvania State, Purdue, Ohio State, the Universities at Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, Iowa, Michigan at Ann Arbor, Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin/Madison (http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/CMCI/cmci_homepage.htm).

Although the State University of New York SUNY Learning Network or SLN (<http://sln.suny.edu/sln>) offers 450 courses, approximately the same number as Western Governors, the complexity and history of the latter merit some further examination, especially as an attractive *virtual university* model. WGU was initiated in 1995 as a joint project of the Western Governors' Association as an outgrowth of discussions on how to encourage states to use information technologies to collaborate in education, industry, and education. WGU, launched approximately one year later, was initially an electronic clearinghouse for online courses and degrees offered by colleges located in its member states. At this point in its history over 450 courses and 24 complete degree programs- Associates, Bachelor's, Masters, and soon a Doctorate- (<http://www.wgu.edu/wgu/smartcatalog/browse>). The second phase, attained in 1998, was offering ten of its own competency based degrees and certificates which are awarded on assessment measures of a student's learning. WGU does not offer any of its own courses to date. There are also plans to link WGU and the United Kingdom's Open University (UKOU), which would make this one of the largest high technology educational combines in the world. The UKOU is at the same time developing a strategy to launch a sister institution of its own, the United States Open University which already has been chartered to operate in Delaware. The USOU will be a separate administrative entity with links to the UKOU and will draw upon the latter's extensive knowledge base including courses and research on distance learning amassed since its founding in 1971.

WGU is similar to the state-based virtual universities in that among its members there is a uniform approach to information sharing, policy coordination, a virtual library initiative, and an open, web-based philosophy of access and ease-of-use so as to achieve for students and other collaborators full organizational transparency.

The US Department of Education is currently looking at ways it can adapt its student aid programs to electronic students in ways that will encourage many more to learn in this fashion. One of the topics under review is providing some government funding for the purchase of computers, and to defray internet access, and telephone fees. Actions like these will "level the playing field," promoting access, helping to minimize differences in income and employment as possible barriers. To the extent that program availability and price stay within necessary parameters the growth of electronic distance education may open countless doors

to higher education in ways undreamed just a decade ago. It is the mandate of democratic institutions, especially those in higher education to go beyond and disseminate the electronic bounty in a spirit of inclusion and opportunity for as many as possible. The reality of college courses by computer has demonstrated that rigorous, quality higher education is attainable for those who cannot be physically part of a college in a traditional manner. As more people are educated and earn degrees in this fashion and it is evidenced that their performance within society is indistinguishable from their conventionally educated coworkers, colleagues, and neighbors, the acceptance of computer courses will spread. Quality performance-based benchmarks will encourage even more people to study electronically

SECTION III PROBLEM AREAS

I would now like to turn to three problem areas and provide brief sketches of some of the factors associated with continuing education for these target areas and populations.

Literacy. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) conducted a 1992 study on adult literacy in the USA (<http://nces.ed.gov/nadlits/naal92/Overview.html#execsum>). This study provided the most detailed overview on the condition of literacy in the USA. The findings revealed that approximately 21 percent of the adult population, more than 40 million people over the age of 16, had only "rudimentary" reading and writing skills. People within this category could identify facts in a newspaper article, but could not compose a letter explaining a credit card bill error. A subgroup in this cohort comprising approximately 8 million people, or 4%, was unable to perform the simplest literacy tasks. By concentrating on functional activities performed by adults in their daily lives, the research project provides nuanced insights into the literacy challenge confronting the US.

The analysis showed functional illiteracy particularly acute among new immigrants, those with visual impairments, and also adults with the least amount of formal education. Older adults, compared with middle aged respondents, were likely to score lower as were Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders compared with White adults. Although men and women showed the same prose proficiencies, men did better in quantitative proficiencies. Most significantly, nearly half of the lowest literacy adults were living in poverty with decreased quality of life and more limited employment opportunities. Even if all people in this low literacy category are not presently experiencing difficulties, the study observes that they may be "at risk" as society continues to change economically and socially. Few would question this assessment. In other studies, especially the report "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages?" corroboration of a widening division between better and lower educated Americans has been identified. For example, over the past 15 year period the earnings of college educated males 24 to 34 years of age have increased 10% while those of high school graduates have declined by 9 percent during the same period (cited in <http://nces.ed.gov/nadlits/naal92/Overview.html#fn4>).

Although the goal of total literacy for the USA has been announced by all recent American presidents and top political leaders, this has been the historic "Achilles heel" of American adult education. In spite of attempts at professionalizing literacy education, it still remains the bastion of volunteer one-to-one tutoring with little investment in staff development. Federal efforts, which were directed towards coupling university based research with literacy teacher training ran afoul of states rights and local control. As a consequence, the federal strategy of direct involvement through regional coordination was decentralized favoring local coordination by each of the fifty states (Leahy, 1991). Leahy questions the effectiveness of this strategy, viewing it as a retreat from professionalism and a more research-based approach. Nonetheless, this is an active area of adult education practice since the problem is so extensive. Kerka (1995) provides an excellent overview of current trends in literacy education for adults stressing the need for reconceptualizing practice so that it is more appealing to adult learners. Among the recommendations summarized are adopting flexibility so that literacy programs are less likely to resemble formal school instruction in structure, practical content favoring independence of action, and power sharing between students and learners. The work of Freire has been influential among literacy practitioners in the USA, especially his concept of empowerment.

Unemployment & Welfare to Work. Short-term education programs for

unemployed adults are now the policy *vademecum* of choice compared with long term welfare assistance programs of indefinite duration. There is, however, a great debate about the efficacy of this approach. Although very attractive to municipal and state officials who are enthusiastic about pruning their welfare rolls, educators with experience in addressing the needs of the unemployed know how complicated the challenge of working with this target group can be. Offering second chance education without fully grasping, and being funded adequately to address the problems faced by these populations is an invitation to disaster. Without a sizeable investment in support services needed to complement educational programs including child support, transportation, housing support, family and job counseling, success will be problematic. There is a long standing contention that schools are not social service agencies and that to confuse the two is not feasible. Early experience in New York shows that there is a steep learning curve when higher education institutions develop educational programs for at risk adults. At the very least, it is fair to predict that results cannot in the short run justify the necessary program expenditures. Therefore if the funding of these programs is based upon successful job placement, which is usually typical for state funded job-training projects, few institutions will be eager to run the risk of failure.

Yet, while this debate takes place, substantial progress has been made in designing a national workforce development system which it is hoped will successfully merge traditional employment and training services (Imel, 1996). This "*one stop shopping*" will replace an *unemployment* system with a *reemployment* system that will use education and training to catapult the under and unemployed into new jobs. The signing of the Workforce Investment (WIA) Act of 1998 on August 7, 1998 by President Clinton culminated six years of effort aimed at consolidating more than sixty training programs into three large block areas: adult employment and training, disadvantaged youth employment and training, and adult education and literacy grants (UCEA, 1999).

For those adults eligible, the new one-stop centers are expected to provide counseling, skill assessment, training, job search assistance including employment information, and referrals to other services in the community. It is envisioned that displaced workers will receive grants to select an approved education provider. There will be program monitoring and, more importantly, regular outcomes assessment of educational effectiveness. Items that are to be factored into this analysis are program specific completion rates, job placement in occupations related to the field of study, and wages of program participants in their new positions. More information about this legislation can be found at the usworkforce.org website ([wysiwyg://4/http://usworkforce.org/vision.htm](http://usworkforce.org/vision.htm)).

Grubb's analysis of the sub-baccalaureate labor market noted the here-to-fore absence of articulation between training and education providers (1994). WIA can answer the need for this essential convergence of effort. By providing active coordination, consolidation, and outcomes assessment, there is every chance to believe that there will be an improvement in dissemination about educational resources and thus an enhancement of their use.

Aging Population. Older people, 65 and above are a large and important segment of the US population. Almost 13% of the population is in this age group, compared with only 4% at the turn of the century. As the post-war "baby boom" generation continues to age, the number of older adults is expected to double during the period 2010-2030. According to a US government study, individuals aged 65 and older may outnumber those under 18 and the "oldest old," those 85 and over, will be the fastest growing segment of all (<http://nces.ed.gov/nadlits/naal92/ElderSum.html>).

The implications of these demographic are profound for adult educators.

Although, improving medical technologies make it possible for Americans to live longer, quality of life may still be problematic for those who suffer from chronic psychological and health problems. Isolation from society, the lack of intimate support groups, and the legacy of poor prior education are just some of the problems that must be addressed.

The successful example of Elderhostel (<http://www.elderhostel.org/>) offers graphic proof of the mobility, income level, and educational appetite for these senior students of the "Third Age." Elderhostel, founded at the University of New Hampshire in 1975, is a nonprofit organization providing worldwide educational programs combining travel, learning, and service for adults. The organization estimates that more than 270,000 participants will engage in over 10,000 Elderhostel activities in 1999. Programs, which are usually hosted at participating universities, combine college level short courses and cultural activities. Students live in college dormitories and take their meals together in what becomes a vibrant peer learning environment. In 1992 public service programs were added offering opportunities teaching English, working at museums, building affordable housing, and helping children with serious illnesses.

The decision of higher education to serve the growing population of seniors through "Learning in Retirement" (LIR) programs is largely a function of the heightened visibility, especially the affluence and influence, of segments of this population (Fischer, Blazey, and Lipman, 1992). Virtually every college in the USA has redirected some portion of its effort towards the retired and semi-retired. A typical LIR is a college or community based organization of retirement age learners dedicated to meeting the educational interests of its members. The members develop and teach their own courses as well as participating in program governance. The State University of New York at Stony Brook's *Round Table* is representative of a college sponsored ILR (<http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Class/rndtable/>). With almost 400 members, the Round Table organizes over twenty courses per term, sponsors workshops, travel, and entertainment. It publishes its own newsletter, catalogues, and supports its website.

In addition to establishing LIR programs, other approaches for this retired audience include free or greatly reduced tuition for credit courses. Educated retirees are an ideal cohort for liberal adult learning since a sizable proportion are freed from the competitive pressures of earning a living. They constitute a privileged subset of the elderly having the means, curiosity, educational experience, and time. This is a population that is also growing dramatically. Because of high prior levels of learning it is relatively easy for colleges and universities to reach out to this population which is often all too happy to return to school. In the 1950's it appeared that continued prosperity, benign automation, and confidence in unlimited industrial productivity would guarantee leisure and unlimited opportunities for all. It is an irony of our epoch that this lotus land can only be visited and enjoyed by those who are no longer members of the workforce.

The National Literacy Study of 1992 (<http://nces.ed.gov/nadlits/naal92/ElderSum.html>) determined that low levels of prose, document, and quantitative skills pose a significant problem for a large portion of the older adult population in the USA. Seventy-one percent of adults aged 60 and above scored in the two lowest levels of prose literacy compared with 41 percent of adults under age 60. In the area of quantitative skills the results were similar. The most troublesome area was document literacy which is associated with completing forms, using schedules, and following written directions. In this sector, 80% of adults 60 and over, scored in the lowest two categories. And, in all three areas, as people aged, their scores worsened. Clearly, there is a need for intervention combining counseling and literacy

education on behalf of these aging students. One solution is to provide literacy services at those locations (libraries, banks, social service agencies, state offices, and senior centers) where older people are prone to visit for other business. Clearly, the broad nature of this problem is national in nature and thus eminently susceptible to a centralized approach.

Conclusion: Images of Continuing Education

I wish to conclude with a brief review of six possible images or ways of viewing continuing education. I offer these in the belief that an impoverished image bank limits our behavioral possibilities, personally and professionally. By expanding the range of metaphors by which we can view the practice of continuing education we can multiply options and the range of services which we offer.

1) The *"cash cow"* is a common metaphor for continuing education in the United States. Within this construct, the purpose of adult education is to develop and market educational commodities to student/consumers. The continuing educator office becomes a store for selling educational commodities. Within this world of marketing, product lines, benchmarking, productivity measures, and net profit, the adult education leader is the *"CEO"* or Chief Executive Officer, as within a corporation or business. There is often a hierarchical chain of command and an emphasis on organizational functionalism as a philosophy. The program focus is the middle class since this population has the disposable income to afford continuing education courses which are often job related and can be expected to increase their earning potential.

2) Another way of viewing adult education is as a *"social change agent addressing societal problems."* Thus the purpose of adult education and adult educators is to improve society, eradicating poverty, addressing inequality and prejudice, and in promoting social justice. The leader is a *"social reformer"* with a utopian project of social reform. The mode of organization is democratic and egalitarian, with a goal towards mirroring within the organization the type of world to be created. Programs are grant supported and that way can be offered without charge, or at minimal cost, to the target population which is heavily composed of at risk populations.

3) Still another metaphor is as a *"catalyst for economic development."* Adult education can assist in *"jump starting"* and furthering the local and regional economies, improving the capabilities of the workforce. Adult education helps to provide the right economic conditions to attract and retain business. It may function to bring about regional business consortia, including *"incubators"* to start new ventures. The continuing education leader is an *"entrepreneur"* able to identify with the needs of dynamic corporate partners. There is a flat, *"quick response"* organizational structure that favors a matrix or project form of organization. Other organizations are the contracting clients, not individuals.

4) The adult education bureau models itself as a *"school for adults extending educational opportunity"* as far into the adult population as possible. The key word in this iteration is *"school"* replicating as fully as possible the opportunities (program choice plus quality) which day students enjoy. The leader views herself/himself as a *"master teacher/master learner"* who is close with students and faculty, striving to create an ideal climate for study and scholarship. The organizational is small group collegial and decision-making is within a group context with much attention paid to process and consensus building.

5) Adult education is the *"front parlor or porch" of the university where "town" meets "gown."* The bureau helps the public learn what the university has to offer and provides a way for them to sample what may be found within. The leader

acts as a "host" welcoming guests and offering hospitality. This is a very relaxed organizational setting with much emphasis on setting a gracious table.

6) Adult education serves as the "*Research & Development unit*" for the institution. It is a place to "pilot" new programs and services and to give faculty a chance to experiment and teach that dream course. The leader is an "inventor," tinkering with the institution, never content to rest and accept traditional interpretations or forms. This is a highly centrifugal organizational model with an emphasis on decentralized decision-making and ongoing experimentation and re-engineering.

The fun of developing classifications like the above should not mask the fact that in the real world, adult education bureaus in the USA fulfill many of the above purposes simultaneously. The history and traditions of the field as well as the egalitarian values embedded in our society generate movement in many directions at once. The characteristics of specific host institutions add further coloration to the emerging image of adult education within individual settings. Overall, the primary characteristic of US adult education is its dynamism and opportunistic expansion whenever external conditions favor its growth. Perhaps, in the final analysis, an image from the biological world suits American adult education best: as an *amoeba*, with no rigid borders, constantly shifting and changing in response to evolving and unpredictable needs.

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