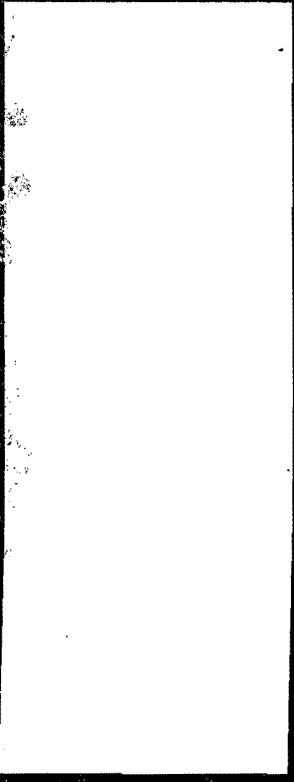


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# ADULT LEARNING

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## International Adult Education >>



# ADULT LEARNING

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# Reaching Beyond the United States: Adventures in International Adult Education and Human Resource Development

**T**ravel adventures originated way back in my life when I was a young grade school boy in Southwestern Michigan. My father and mother talked about our family making an automobile trip to California; this was immediately after World War II. The closest we came to California was traveling to Kansas City for the purpose of bringing my oldest sister home for the summer from college. However, on the way home, the boxes of her belongings fell off the top of the car in the middle of the night. We stopped to pick them up and went on home—quite an adventure it was!

## Developing an International Interest

In high school, my two sisters and I traveled as a musical evangelistic team to various churches in six Southeastern United States. I also traveled to Chicago many times to visit my sisters during their time in college. During my college days in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, I went on a wonderful month-long choir tour in 14 Western states and Mexico—my first international venture. Through my theological seminary male chorus and quartet, I toured in six Midwestern states. I also heard about my seminary professors' international study visits to the Holy Land. My honeymoon travels took my wife and me to 13 Eastern states in the United States and to Canada. Our pastoral

ministry also found us in other new places.

My preparation for becoming an adult educator moved us from central Illinois to Boston University, and my curiosity was piqued as I heard adult educators and human resource developers describe their international work. All these adventures stirred my penchant for travel and interest in international adult education, but my inclination incubated for a number of years.

## Highlights of My International Work

After many years in the field, I was afforded my first and second international opportunities in adult education (AE) and human resource development (HRD). The year was 1985, and the countries were Brazil, through the Partners of the Americas; and Germany, through the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) and The German Adult Education Association. In the ensuing 22 years, exponential growth of my international AE and HRD work has taken me on 30 different journeys to 14 countries, where I primarily focused on andragogy—the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1980). I have also had numerous foreign students in my adult education courses at the University of Missouri. Thus, I have worked with adult learners from 76 countries.

My international AE and HRD work in multiple formats includes presenting papers

## By John A. Henschke

*John A. Henschke, Ed.D., is an Associate Professor of adult education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a Continuing Education Specialist for the University of Missouri Extension. He is past president of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, past chair of the Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE), and a board member of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (IACEHOF).  
(E-mail: Henschkej@missouri.edu)*

at international AE and HRD conferences and presenting papers about my participation in international AE and HRD at conferences in the United States. I have facilitated numerous AE and HRD courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, concurrent sessions, and keynote addresses in various international countries, as well as conducted adult learning courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences for various foreign delegations coming to the United States. Furthermore, in 2004 and 2005, I chaired the Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE) Pre-Conference of AAACE. I am a member of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (IACEHOF) and serve on its Strategic Planning Committee.

### Countries and Learner Organizations With Whom I Have Worked

I have been fortunate to work in numerous countries, including Brazil, Germany, Peoples' Republic of China, South Africa, Canada, Slovenia, Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus, United Kingdom, Thailand, Hong Kong, Australia, and Italy. Groups I have worked with in various countries include university and college faculty, corporate AE, HRD, and health care professionals, correctional educators, municipal judges, community, church, and other religious leaders, public and private school teachers, and business and industry executives, just to name a few.

My work has enabled me to present on a number of topics, such as methods and techniques for helping adults learn, leadership, principles, theories, practices, and other aspects (i.e., history and future trends) of AE and HRD in the United States and the world. In addition, I have covered topics on program development marketing, curriculum theory and development, distance learning, Malcolm S. Knowles, lifelong learning, and andragogy. To see a more complete list, visit [www.umsl.edu/~henschke](http://www.umsl.edu/~henschke).

One of the most interesting international projects in which I have been continuously involved is research and publication on the international foundation of the theory, research, and practice of andragogy. I launched this inquiry after Malcolm S. Knowles' death in 1997 to honor his legacy. To date, my colleague, Dr. Mary Cooper, and I have collaborated in this for eight years at this writing. Thus far we have identified more than 300 English language documents from the cultures and contexts of 30 countries. In addition, there are more than 200 doctoral dissertations and about 30 master's theses focused on this topic. The themes of andragogy's international foundation include evolution of the term; historical antecedents shaping the concept; comparing the American and European understandings of andragogy; popularizing and sustaining the American and worldwide concept of andragogy; practical applications of andragogy; and, theory, research, and definition of andragogy.

One iteration of this ongoing research (Cooper & Henschke, 2007) appears in the first textbook in the AE and HRD field, edited and published on the broad topic of comparative international adult education (King & Wang, 2007). They note that Cooper's and Henschke's chapter on andragogy "does not skirt the issues that have embroiled the concept and theory of andragogy. Instead, the controversy is presented full force and most valuably it is fully referenced and documented in order for the

readers to seek out the original literature firsthand" (p. 283). They further state it is a "robust contribution," "develops substantial insight," and provides a . . . "much needed perspective on the ongoing development of what many erroneously consider a static concept" (p. 6).

### Lessons Learned

I have learned that adults learn quite the same everywhere around the world. The only difference I detect and have observed is how their learning relates to their context. Adult educators around the world are very generous and kind people who are interested in knowing and using everything they may find out about the benefits of how to help adults learn. International ventures have been some of the most exciting and learning-filled aspects of my career in AE and HRD. My involvement in international AE and HRD has motivated my increasing interest and research on andragogy—the art and science of helping adults learn. See my andragogy Web site, [www.umsl.edu/~henschkej/andragogy.htm](http://www.umsl.edu/~henschkej/andragogy.htm), for more information.

If you desire involvement in international adult education, first, follow your inclinations. Second, with the ever-present Internet availability, do a "search" and learn from: a) The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame, b) Partners of the Americas, c) international adult education, d) international human resource development, and e) other related topics that come to mind. Third, consider the suggestions from each author in this issue. Fourth, think about the major theme of your work and how you may turn that interest into exploring and pursuing some work internationally. Fifth, make contact with those interested in international AE and HRD at the CIAE pre-conference that is held just prior to the annual AAACE Conference. Sixth, look up the CIAE and AAACE conference dates and location each year at [www.aaace.org](http://www.aaace.org).

### Using This in Your Setting

My encouragement to you is a number of things. Think how you may include international aspects of AE and HRD in your work. Glean from these articles one or two ideas you may like to try in your program. In the courses, seminars, workshops, etc., that you conduct, ask the participants to think and share about the international AE and HRD they may be interested in or of which they have heard.

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