

**Reaching Beyond the USA: Adventures Internationally in
Adult Education (AE) and Human Resource Development (HRD)**

by John A. Henschke

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Travel 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, and this was to be 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 on the car in the middle of the night! We did stop to pick them up and went on home – quite an adventure it was!

Developing an International Interest.

In high school my two sisters (Joyce and Doris) and I traveled as a musical evangelistic team to various churches in six [6] southeastern states. I also traveled to Chicago many times to visit my sisters during their time there in college. During my college days in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis & St. Paul), I went on a wonderful month-long choir tour in fourteen western states and Mexico – my first venture internationally. Theological seminary in Chicago had me singing baritone in the male chorus and male quartet. We toured in six Midwestern states. I also heard about my seminary professors' international study visits to the Holy Land. My wife and my honeymoon travels took us to thirteen eastern states and Canada – my second venture internationally. And our pastoral ministry found us in other 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, and my inclination incubated for a number of years.

Highlights of My International Work

It was after the completion of my doctoral work at Boston University, more than a decade of being a Continuing Education Specialist [CES] at University of Missouri Extension, and three years into my split appointment as a CES, and Associate Professor of Adult Education at University of Missouri-St. Louis, that I was afforded my first and second opportunities internationally in adult education [AE] and human resource development [HRD] – the year was 1985 – in Brazil through the Partners of the Americas, and in Germany through the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education [AAACE], and The German Adult Education Association [DVV]. In the ensuing 22 years, an exponential growth of my international AE and HRD work has taken me on 30 different journeys to 14

countries, mainly focusing on one major theme – andragogy – the art and science of helping adults learn: teaching and facilitating adult learning. I have also had numerous foreign learners / 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: [1] Presenting papers at international AE and HRD conferences; [2] Presenting papers about my participation in international AE and HRD at conferences in the USA; [3] Facilitating numerous AE and HRD courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, concurrent sessions, and keynote addresses internationally in various countries; [4] Conducting adult learning courses, workshops, seminars and conferences for various foreign delegations coming to the USA; [5] Chairing and Editing the Proceedings of the Commission on International Adult Education [CIAE] Pre-Conference, AAACE 2004 and 2005; [6] Being involved as a member in promoting the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame [IACEHOF]; and, [7] Working on the Strategic Planning Committee of the IACEHOF.

Countries and Learner Organizations With Whom I Have Worked Including Topics.

The countries I have worked in and times I have been there are: Brazil – 6, Germany – 7, Peoples’ Republic of China – 6, South Africa – 3, Canada – 3, Slovenia – 2, Egypt – 1, Jordan – 1, Cyprus – 1, United Kingdom – 1, Thailand – 1, Hong Kong – 1, Australia – 1, Italy – 1.

Groups I have worked with in the various countries include: University and College Faculty, Corporate Adult Education and Human Resource Development Professionals, Correctional Educators, Municipal Judges, Church and Other Religious Leaders, Public and Private School Teachers, Literacy Educators, Volunteer Workers, Business and Industry Executives, Social Service Agency Professionals, Community Leaders, Health Care Professionals, Academy of Educational Sciences Professionals, Folk School Administrators and Teachers, Professional Associations, Teacher Education Institutions, and Researchers in Adult Education and Human Resource Development.

Topics presented covered a wide range: Methods and Techniques for Helping Adults Learn; Leadership in Adult Education [AE] and Human Resource Development [HRD]; History, Orientation, Situation, and Future Trends of AE and HRD in the USA and the World; Program Development Marketing; Curriculum Theory and Development; Distance Learning; Personal Integrity in Marketing; Reflections on Learning with Malcolm S. Knowles; Moving a Traditional Educational Institution Toward a Lifelong Learning Orientation; Global Trends in AE and HRD; Exploring Andragogy Worldwide; International Development of Coalitions, Exchanges and Partnerships; Preparing Educators of Adults; AE and HRD Innovation in a University Context; Building Blocks for Conducting AE and HRD, The Living Lecture; and Research in The Principles, Theories, and Practices of AE and HRD.

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. My colleague, Dr. Mary

Cooper and I have collaborated in this for eight years at this writing, and plan to continue. 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 Masters 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 and 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 and 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); and, "...a robust contribution...develops substantial insight...a much need perspective on the ongoing development of what many erroneously consider a static concept (p. 6).

Lessons I 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 website: <http://www.umsl.edu/~henschke>

If You Desire Involvement.

First, follow your inclinations. Second, with the ever-present internet availability, do a 'search' and learn from: [1] The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame, [2] Partners of the Americas, [3] International Adult Education, [4] International Human Resource Development, and, [5] Other related topics that come to mind. Third, consider the hints/suggestions from each author in this issue on International AE and HRD. Fourth, think about the major theme of your work and how you may turn that interest into exploring and pursuing some work internationally. Fifth, you will have contact with those interested in International AE and HRD, if you come to the Commission on International Adult Education [CIAE] Pre-Conference that is held just prior to the annual American Association for Adult and Continuing Education [AAACE] Conference. Sixth, look up the CIAE and AAACE conference dates and location each year at www.aaace.org This year [2007] will be October 30 to November 2, in Norfolk, VA.

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, and the actually try them. In the courses, seminars, workshops, etc., that you conduct; ask the participants to think and share about international AE and HRD they may have some interest in or of which they have heard.

References

Cooper, M., & Henschke, J. (2007). "Expanding our thinking about andragogy: Toward the International Foundation for its research, theory and practice linkage in adult education and human resource development – a continuing research study." In K. King, & V. Wang (Eds.). *Comparative adult education around the globe: International portraits and readings of the history, practice, philosophy, and theories of adult learning* (pp. 151-194). Hangzhou, Peoples' Republic of China: Zhejiang University Press.

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