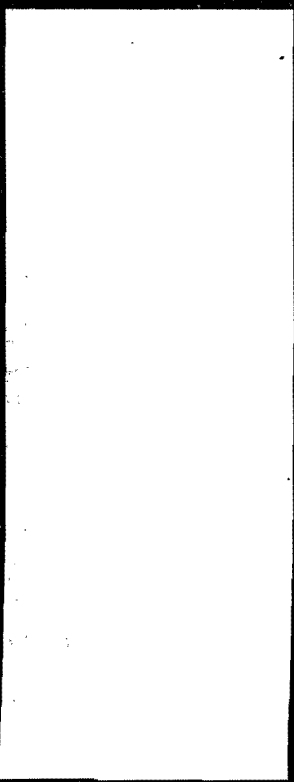


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Perspectives on International Adult Education

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)

In recent years, international adult education has emerged increasingly as a prominent force on the adult education horizon. Although many adult educators have been conducting adult education programs for numerous decades around the world, the Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE), formerly the international unit of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), has been a most important catalyst for raising awareness and interest in international adult education, stretching around the globe to help adults learn in various cultures, contexts, and countries.

The seven articles in this "international adult education" themed issue of *Adult Learning* (our journal of theory and practice) draw upon a group of authors who share their experiences and a broad spectrum of active engagement in facilitating adult learning through a multiplicity of adult education programs. Come with us on a delightful trip as we criss-cross the globe!

In the first article, Roger Morris, from "down under" in Australia, reflects on his numerous significant international adult education encounters. He has done this during a 30-year period of time to overcome what some call "the tyranny of distance" that separates Australia from other parts of the world, including Asia, North America, Europe, and the South Pacific. Roger has been deeply involved with the United Nations Educational,

Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE).

In the second article, Gretchen T. Bersch from Alaska describes in glowing terms how her grandmother and parents (because of their energetic, adventurous, and visionary penchant for travel) inspired in her a lifelong interest in international work throughout many parts of the world. As a consequence, Gretchen built a figurative bridge from Alaska over the Bering Strait to Magadan, Russia (in far Eastern Siberia). She poignantly describes the work she has done since the iron curtain fell in 1988 between Russia and Alaska, and how she has helped destitute people in a region where daily life is a challenge often filled with unimaginable sadness.

In the third article, Peggy Gabo Ntseane from Botswana, Southern Africa, tells of her excitement for international adult education, arising from Setwana Proverbs: "we learn from one another," and "a bag of locust can only be lifted if we all lift it." Combining the cultural socialization and indigenous learning models of collective learning with the individualized learning models of the United States helped Peggy focus her adult education work on the function of spearheading global social justice.

In the next article, Qi Sun takes us to the Peoples' Republic of China. She developed her interest in international adult

education through the Scientific Research Institute of International and Comparative Education (SRIICE) at Beijing Normal University and discovered its connections with Russia, Eastern Europe, France, Germany, Japan, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and UNESCO. She emphasizes her gratitude for the opportunities afforded to her as a result of her affiliations with numerous international adult education groups. As a multilingual adult educator, she is often called on to serve as translator to many individuals and groups.

The fifth article whisks us to Greece and its rich culture, the launching pad from which Marcie Boucouvalas blossomed into a true internationalist. Marcie travels to numerous countries, and hosts a multiplicity of adult education delegations and visitors to the United States in the Washington, DC, area. She focuses on the communication of people between languages and culture as contributing to a “way of being” with others around the world. This ‘way of being’ also includes identity, paradox, integration, and resonance.

Rosemary Closson transports us to many places in Africa and delves into the very practical matters of helping people learn how to purify water, store vegetables, become adept at reading, sustain human rights, be anti-HIV, care for orphans, live ethically,

exemplify management practices, raise funds, and build internal capacity. Rosemary shares insights regarding the power of nonformal education to profoundly change adult lives and the future of nations.

Finally, I bring us back to the United States where I share my experience of how travel and adult education merged, for me, into a major emphasis in international adult education (AE) and human resource development (HRD). This was all guided by my ideas about andragogy—the art and science of helping adults learn—and I ultimately became involved in researching its international foundation. Working with adult learners from numerous countries and conducting programs in several of them with adult educators (my most intensive and extensive being in Brazil) has been a top-notch, exhilarating experience in my AE and HRD career.

Join us on our “magic carpet” as we move rapidly around the world. Then, consider how you may also become thoroughly engaged in international adult education. ▼