

Foreword

Historically, adult education was rooted in a variety of social movements. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the adult education movements responded to social and economic needs—Mechanics Institutes in Australia, Women’s Institutes and the Antigonish movement in Canada, and the Highlander Folk School in the United States, to name just a few. The goals of such movements were to improve the conditions of manual laborers, oppressed groups, illiterate people, women, farmers and others through informal education networks, study groups, and collective action. In other words, adult education was about reaching out to those in need and those who would benefit from improved skills, increased knowledge, and better conditions. What was then called “correspondence courses” (an early form of distance education, in which people corresponded by mail with tutors) played a significant role in adult education.

By the late 1960s and the 1970s, attention turned increasingly to individual learners, in part through the work of Malcolm Knowles who introduced us to the concept of andragogy and, within that, self-directed learning. It was also at this time that adult education began to move into the academic world with the establishment of small programs and departments of adult education. Adult educators in academia drew on psychology (among other disciplines) to create a theoretical framework for their research and practice, furthering the focus on individuals. This is not to say that the goal of social change faded; adult educators drew on critical theory to support their work with issues related to gender, race, class, and sexual orientation.

When the technology for hosting distance education in online and web-based courses and programs arrived on the education scene, adult education embraced this opportunity. Having education accessible to those in rural and remote areas already had a firm place in adult education, as did reaching out to those who could not attend formal education programs during the hours when they were at work. Earlier on, there was some tension in this regard, though, as those people who were most likely to be involved did not necessarily have the means to own a computer or obtain internet connections, nor the skills needed to use the technology. Today, this is still an issue in some rural areas and in developing countries, but universal access (though perhaps not reliable access) seems to be becoming a reality.

In spite of the obviously happy and practical marriage between adult education and communication technologies, writing and research that integrate the fields has not been brought together into one place and made accessible to scholars and practitioners. The *Encyclopedia of Information Communication Technologies and Adult Education* has done just that. It provides a comprehensive coverage of the issues, concepts, and trends that integrate adult education and communication technologies. The chapters are written by leading scholars in both fields, creating an in-depth compendium of terms and definitions, and explanations of theories, concepts, and processes.

More than 60 chapters address a wide array of topics, some focusing more on adult education in general, and others emphasizing the use of technology in the field, but all with an eye to integrating work across the disciplines. Some of the chapters that especially drew my attention include the notion of blended learning, where participants are online for a part of their work and together physically at other times; interactive technologies and how they contribute to adult learning at a distance; virtual environments; how to establish community online; culturally responsive teaching online; age, race, and gender issues; promoting transformative learning online; and the evaluation of learning online. I have been facilitating online courses in adult education for close to ten years now, and I have generally followed the practical literature for online teachers. Even so, I can see that there are many things for me to learn and explore in this encyclopedia.

Patricia Cranton

Patricia Cranton, PhD, is currently Professor of Adult Education at Penn State University at Harrisburg. She has been Professor of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University, University of New Brunswick, and Brock University in Canada. Prior to that, she was on faculty at McGill University from 1976 to 1986. Patricia Cranton's books include *Planning Instruction for Adult Learners* (1989) with a second edition in 2000, *Working with Adult Learners* (1992) also translated into Japanese in 1999, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (1994) also translated into Chinese in 1995, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning* (1996) also translated into Japanese in 2000, *No One Way: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (1998), *Personal Empowerment through Type* (1998), *Becoming an Authentic Teacher* (2001), *Finding our Way: A Guide for Adult Educators* (2003). The second edition of *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* was published in 2006. Patricia has edited five *New Directions* volumes, *Transformative Learning in Action* (1997), *Universal Challenges in Faculty Work: Fresh Perspectives from around the World* (1997), *Fresh Approaches to the Evaluation of Teaching* (2001), *Authenticity in Teaching* (2006), and *Reaching Out Across the Border: Canadian Perspectives in Adult Education* (with Leona English, 2009). She is currently working with Ed Taylor to prepare the *Handbook of Transformative Learning*.