

A Canadian Approach to Higher Education, Community-Engagement and the Public Good: The Future of Continuing Education¹

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Introduction

I am happy to share this article with readers of the PRIA journal. On questions of adult education, community development and citizenship there has been a rich history of exchange and collaboration over the years. Beginning with the Colombo Project of 1963 with the visit of young Canadian adult educators J.Roby Kidd, James Draper, Bill Day and John Friesen to the University of Rajasthan where they met Mohan Singh Mehta and his contemporaries through the links between Budd Hall, Rajesh Tandon, Lalita Ramdas in the 1970s, to the on-going contemporary work between persons such as Darlene Clover and Catherine McGregor with Martha Farrell, Mandakini Pant, Namrata Jaitli and others the story has been rich and continuous. It has been an exchange between equals with Canadians learning so much from India and India drawing on work they found in Canada. I offer this piece about the contemporary debates about community-university engagement in Canada in a spirit of utmost humility. I know that readers in India and those outside India will take what they can from it and set that which does not fit aside.

This article should be seen in the context of a long history of debate and discussion about the relationship between continuing education and the public good that the Canadian Association of University Continuing Education has supported over its lifetime. Ned Corbett, J Roby Kidd, Alan Thomas former Directors of the Canadian Association for Adult Education all participated in these debates in the 1940s- 80s (Brooke and Waldron, 1994; Selman et al, 1998). Denis Haughey challenged us continually to live up to the ideals of the Regina Manifesto and the foundational values of continuing education in Canada (2006). Most recently Scott McLean (2007) and Tom Nesbit (2008) in this journal have revived the professional debate about directions worth pursuing. We are indebted to Walter Archer, the Editor-in-Chief, for providing space for a fuller exchange in this issue.

In this article I discuss the contexts that our Higher Education Institutions are facing, the contestation for the benefits of Higher Education, the transformative potential of community engagement, responses from the world of Higher Education, challenges continuing education in Canada faces and some elements of an agenda for action that would take Continuing Education forward within the broader movement of community-university engagement that is clearly underway.

Contexts

Cristina Escrigas, the Executive Director of the Global University Network for Innovation that produced the 2008 encyclopedic and visionary report on Higher Education in the World, *Higher Education: New Challenges and Emerging Roles for*

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Human and Social Development, says that it is time to,” review and reconsider the interchange of values between university and society; that is to say, we need to rethink the social relevance of universities” (Taylor, 2008 p xxviii). Humanity, she goes on to say, “is now facing a time of major challenges, not to say, serious and profound problems regarding coexistence and relations with the natural environment. Unresolved problems include social injustice, poverty and disparity of wealth, fraud and lack of democracy, armed conflicts, exhaustion of natural resources and more” (p xxiv).

Martha Piper, former President of the University of British Columbia brings the question much closer to home when noting, “...even as we pride ourselves on our achievements, there are those who argue our influence in the world stage is waning. A walk down Hastings and Main in Vancouver is a sober reminder that poverty, homeless and drug abuse lie, in the heart of one of the most affluent cities in the world, steps away...something is wrong” (2003, 128)

Rajesh Tandon, one of the most respected global civil society leaders has suggested that at a global level, a 21st century political agenda that can respond to the challenges need to include: movement towards inclusive globalization; climate change and sustainability solutions; peace and global citizenship; human rights and social inclusion; and democratizing governance. (2008, 146)

Contestation for Higher Education space: a diversity of trends?

While I have framed the contexts from a perspective of deepening an inclusive form of society, there have been many others who would harness the substantial powers of the universities to other purposes. Those of us in continuing education are often at the centre of this contestation. “Market forces”, for example, are held out to be at both a global level and local level to be almost magical in their abilities to shape social needs, including learning needs. If there is a market demand for a programme or course it will go, if not, it is either not really needed or not our responsibilities. The turmoil in the market which emerged so dramatically in October and November of 2008 have caused us to think again about the risks of a slave-like dependence on the market perhaps. Another source of pressure comes from the increased influence of corporations as Universities reach out for donations and engagement because of generally stalemated public support for higher education at Provincial levels in Canada. Corporate interests are extremely interested in the knowledge creating capacities of our universities. If they could somehow channel more of the research results from publically supported university science labs across the country into profitable and marketable business applications, it would mean less necessary investment in R and D on their parts and tangible benefits to their investors. And universities have turned as well, out of necessity, to the students themselves and their families to pay higher tuition to cover a larger proportion of the costs of their learning, thus increasing the debt burden on students, excluding some students, and making it necessary for nearly all students to do at least some work while they go to school.

Engagement: An unstoppable force?

Community-university engagement is arguably the strongest theme cutting across all our university campuses these days. There has been a veritable explosion of writing on community-university engagement over the past five to six years. Ernest Boyer laid down the conceptual foundations with his development of the concept of “engaged scholarship” (1996). The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (Kellogg Commission 1999) shifted the terms *research*, *teaching* and *serve* to the words *discovery*, *learning* and *engagement*. Susan Ostrander from Tufts University did a study of civil engagement on five campuses in the United States during 2001, which resulted in the articulation of a number of necessary components for effective engagement. (Ostrander, 2004). David Watson former Vice-Chancellor of Brighton University initiated a robust Community-University Partnership Programme (CUPP) at his university, but in addition is one of the most persuasive and eloquent spokespersons for the links between lifelong learning, communities and university engagement. (Watson 2007; Watson and Maddison, 2005; Watson 2008; Watson 2009). Angie Hart, current academic director of CUPP has added much to our understanding of how community engagement works and some useful ideas about how to evaluate the impact of this work. (Hart, Maddison and Wolff 2007; Hart, Northmore and Gerhardt, 2007). Barbara Holland and Judith Ramaley of University of Western Sidney and Winona State University respectively have reviewed community engagement approaches in the UK, Spain, Germany, India, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa and have created a typology of how Universities approach the change associated with the community-university change agenda. They identify the planning, leadership, engagement strategies, accountability frameworks and more of institutions taking *routine*, *strategic* or *transformative* approaches to the engagement process. (Holland and Ramaley, 2008). In Canada, Edward Jackson at Carleton University has conceptualized what he calls the “CUE (Community-University Engagement) Factor”. He writes of the dynamic triangle of community-university engagement being: community-based experiential learning; community-based research and community-based continuing education. He calls on universities across Canada to, “increase their CUE factors by deepening and broadening their teaching, research and volunteering activities with the external constituencies that

have the greatest need for sustainable solutions to the challenges they face every day”(Jackson 1).

The Addition of Community-Based Research and Community Service Learning

One of the three legs of the Jackson’s CUE Factor, community-based research, has a particularly strong Canadian history and specificity. In the mid-1970s a group of researchers based in Toronto and associated with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the International Council for Adult Education created a group called the participatory research project. Hall, Jackson, Marino, Barndt, Conchelos and others had a variety of community-based research experiences in Canada and other parts of the world. They were supported by the late Drs. J. Roby Kidd and James Draper who were Professors in the Adult Education Department at OISE and in the case of Dr. Kidd, the Secretary-General of the newly launched International Council for Adult Education (Hall, 2005). Inspired in part by this early work and by the experience of the Science Shops in the Netherlands, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council created the SSHRC-Community University Research Alliance (CURA) funding structure. The

Our institutions recognize that we do not exist in isolation from society, nor from the communities in which we are located. Instead, we carry a unique obligation to listen, understand and contribute to social transformation and development. Higher education must extend itself for the good of the society to embrace communities near and far. In doing so, we will promote our core missions of teaching, research and service.

The university should use the processes of education and research to respond to, serve and strengthen its communities for local and global citizenship. The university has a responsibility to participate actively in the democratic process and to empower those who are less privileged.

Excerpt from the **Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education**, September 17, 2005

CURA model has become known widely throughout the world and has resulted in rise of a unique meeting space called the Community-University Expositions (CUexpos) which have now taken place in Saskatoon in 2003, Winnipeg in 2005 and Victoria in 2008. Out of this combined energy has come the recently created Community-Based Research Canada (CBRC) and the Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research. (<http://www.uvic.ca/ocbr>). John Loxely recipient of the 2008 Canadian Association of University Teachers Distinguished Academic Award in his acceptance speech on *the Interdisciplinary Intellectual and Public Policy Research* the model of research, requires, joint development of research proposals and results which in the case of his work with Aboriginal Community Economic Development with concrete contributions to combating poverty in those communities (Loxely, 2008)

Within our universities, CBR has begun to become institutionalized. The University of Victoria in January of 2007 created the Office of Community-Based Research as a

university-wide structure reporting to the Vice-President of Research (<http://uvic.ca/ocbr>). The Harris Centre at Memorial University in Newfoundland serves a similar function throughout Newfoundland and Labrador (Fitzpatrick 2008). The Trent Centre for Community Education, the Institute for CBR at Vancouver Island University, the Community University Partnership Programme at the University of Alberta, the Centre for Community-Based Research in Kitchener, the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action at Wilfred-Laurier University in Waterloo, the Services aux Collectivités at UQAM and others have sprung up across the country.

The maturation of an identifiable field of CBR adds to the extremely strong work done nationally in community-based service learning beginning formally in 1999 with the funding by the J.W. McConnell Foundation of the Service Learning programme at St. Francis Xavier University. As service learning rapidly grew across Canada, a non-profit alliance grew to support the theory and practice which is now based at Carleton University in Ottawa and called the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL) <http://www.communityservicelearning.ca>. CSL has, like CBR taken on a particularly Canadian flavour. From their web site above, CACSL defines community service learning as, “an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities. Within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial”.

Community-based research and community service learning add to the rich and varied resources, skills, capacities and imagination already present in the Canadian Continuing Education field. In spite of recent pressures on the historic structures of continuing education that have resulted in the demise of continuing education units at the University of Saskatchewan and Trent University, the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education remains the most robust of the three legs of the dynamic triangle of community-engagement. We still have hundreds of thousands of adult learners taking a bewildering array of courses that include such direct social justice offerings as University 101 at the University of Victoria or it’s many sister programmes across the country where street people and marginalized persons are taking university level courses for the first time in their lives. There are stories of institutional courage, imagination and effective community engagement in every single continuing studies unit across this country. This pool of historical memory and practical how-to-do-it is an invaluable and necessary central piece if our contemporary Canadian universities are to find their way forward to meet the current challenges, which our moment calls forth.

What is Community-Based Research?

The term “community-based research” that is in use at the University of Victoria encompasses a spectrum of research that actively engages community members or groups to various degrees, ranging from community participation to community initiation and control of research. From a *university perspective*, community-based research refers to a wide variety of practices and is supported by several academic traditions: Academic or scientific knowledge put at the service of community needs; Joint university and community partnerships in the identification of research problems and development of

methods and applications; Research that is generated in community settings without formal academic links at all; Academic research under the full leadership and control of community or non-university groups; Joint research, which conceived as part of organizing, mobilizing or social advocacy or action.

For the purposes of the consultations undertaken prior to the creation of the Office of Community-Based research we used a modified version of a definition published by Kerry Strand and others in their 2003 article, “Principles of Best Practice for Community-Based Research”:

Community-based research (CBR) involves research done by community groups with or without the involvement of a university. In relation with the university CBR is a collaborative enterprise between academics and community members. CBR seeks to democratize knowledge creation by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination. The goal of CBR is social action (broadly defined) for the purpose of achieving (directly or indirectly) social change and social justice. (P 5)

A transformative idea

The emergence of community university engagement is far more than an effort to consolidate space for those of us working within the universities. It is, I maintain, a critical strategic choice for public investment if we are to be able to respond to the challenges we face today. My proposition is the following. *In communities where higher education institutions exist, Universities and Colleges, the collective resources of these institutions (students, academic staff, facilities, research funding, knowledge, skills) represent the largest accessible, available and under-utilized resource for community*

A university’s contribution to the community consists in the main of knowledge creation, knowledge preservation, and knowledge transfer and knowledge application. These activities occur across a broad spectrum, ranging from the direct benefits of our teaching and research, our adult and continuing education programs, through community engagement in our fine and performing arts and athletics programs, through technology transfer and the development of spin-off companies. Our role in supporting knowledge transfer and contributing to the intellectual, social, cultural and economic development of this region and country is central to our mission.

change and sustainability that we have. I believe that this is a critical point as we are not likely to see substantial new monies flowing into our communities from their tax bases, neither from Provincial coffers nor from the Federal government in the foreseeable future. Communities need to take an asset-based approach to increasing community health sustainability and economic development. Higher education institutions already exist in hundreds of communities across the country. Increasing the CUE Factor in these communities has the promise of bring significant new energies and practical resources. In the local context of Victoria where I live and work, we have a community of roughly 300,000 inhabitants and two higher education institutions, the University of Victoria and Camosun College. The annual research flow of research funds through the University of Victoria is greater than \$100 million. Combined our institutions have some 35,000 students and 4500 faculty and staff. A modest shift in the institutional gaze of our two institutions and some imaginative partnership structures can result in significant impact on the kinds of issues that our community faces today such as homelessness, food security, Aboriginal health and education and more.

Continuing Education: Assets and Challenges

As I have earlier noted, continuing education units across the country have over 100 years of experience in community university engagement. We have a strong practical base in the fields of life-long learning, a cornerstone of civic or community engagement. We have become, sometimes reluctantly, extremely creative and entrepreneurial. We know our communities. We know the business world, the world of the professions, those who have been pushed out or left out of our education institutions. And importantly we have a remarkable variety of community based learning and teaching facilities all over our communities. But we face significant challenges that must be faced and addressed.

The past 30 years has seen a steady decline in institutional support for continuing education. While at one time, all continuing education units in the country would have had core budgets to support their programming costs, it is the rare institution where we can still count on central university funds to underpin the social engagement mission of community programming. And, speaking, as a former Dean of Education at my own university, there is also a perception amongst others in the university that continuing education lies somehow outside the core functions at the heart of the university. Continuing Education is cherished for its revenue generating capacities by the senior administration, but in many of our universities there is a broad and mysterious cloud over what actually happens in most of our areas of programming. The academic credit programmes lie at the heart. Further, with exceptions to be sure, continuing education has not been seen at the core of the knowledge creation functions, the research functions of the university. And finally, the years have seen a split between the academic study of adult and lifelong learning and the fields of continuing education. In the 1970s and 80s, it was a regular practice for Canadian academic researchers to meet with the continuing education folks. Indeed many of our academic leaders in the early development of adult education came from continuing education. By 2009, few of our adult education research

and academic teaching units have robust connections. The number of colleagues from continuing education who are regularly seen at the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education meetings can be counted on the fingers of two hands. The numbers of CASAE folks who show up at CAUCE events on one hand.

Some directions to avoid

Change is omni-present. From Bob Dylan's *Times They Are A Changin'* Anthem of my youth to the slogan of Barak Obama's meteoric campaign for the Presidency of the United State, *Change* is the question, *Change* is the hope and *Change* is the answer. So the first thing to be avoided is business as usual. It just won't cut it! A second approach that I suggest will not work is the treatment of social, cultural, justice and sustainability issues as separate from market forces. The economy is too important to be left to economists and business folks. The experience and skills that we have acquired in the community economic development field in Canada over the past 20 years, most visible currently in the work of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (<http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca>) demonstrates that equity and profit can coexist and perhaps enhance the effectiveness of both. For those of you who are the marketing gurus of your continuing education units, social justice is not the enemy. For those of you who long for the days of the Antigonish movement, the market is not your enemy. Because crimes have been committed on Wall Street does not make our community business leaders any less important to our communities. And the final thing that I would avoid is the idea that instructional technologies, learning technologies, social networking strategies or similar web 2.0 approaches will *in and of themselves* bring about the change we need.

Towards an Agenda for Action

So what should we fight for? Where to put our energies? Our opportunities will vary college-by-college, university-by-university depending on how the CUE factor is rolling out and how we are placed within the influence structures of our institutions, but there are some suggestions based on what research tells us seems to have worked in some places:

- Getting into the research game with enthusiasm – Strengthening the research profile of continuing education within our universities and across the country would go a long ways towards bridging the perception gap between our continuing education units and the rest of the university. A specific research strategy would allow us to develop a strong evidence base to contribute to the CUE factor that our institutions are supporting. Increasing our role as part of interdisciplinary research teams, SSHRC-CURA proposals and identifying someone in each of our CE units as the research leader or coordinator, where that does not exist, would be a great step.
- Create research chairs in Continuing Education and Society – Research Chairs are the game these days. As far as I know, David Livingstone at OISE/UT is the only Canada Research Chair in Lifelong Learning. We need more. Why can't a

- continuing education unit go together with an education faculty or a social sciences faculty or other options to make a case for a Learning and Society Chair?
- Lead or saturate University-wide discussions, task forces or committees on community-university engagement or civic engagement. If you get wind of something like this going on insist on getting into the middle of it. Continuing education has so much to bring to the table and the opportunity to speak in the new CUE factor language would be great.
 - Supporting the creation of university-wide community-based research structures. Civic engagement strategies depend on strengthening the supportive structures for all legs of the civic engagement stool: continuing education, community-based research and community service learning. It is time to move from individual scale efforts and centres to university strategies.
 - Creating research and action alliances with community agencies and organizations. The University of Calgary has created the Urban Alliance with the City of Calgary. The Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria is co-chaired by the CEO of the United Way of Greater Victoria. The Community-University Institute for Social Research at the University of Saskatchewan has a community co-chair.
 - Linking to knowledge mobilization efforts. Knowledge mobilization, knowledge transfer, knowledge translation, knowledge exchange are the current focus of our granting councils that would like to see as much research as possible making an impact on policy. York University has a Knowledge Mobilization Unit as does the University of Victoria, but these units are about outreach, impact, communications and action.
 - Getting (back) into the for-credit academic programming fields of adult and lifelong learning. The University of Glasgow's Department of Adult and Continuing Education combines the functions of an academic research and teaching unit in adult and continuing education with a continuing education function.
 - Convening community consultation processes about the role of the university in the solution of issues in your community. The University of Victoria has recently convened a forum on homelessness and housing affordability with government, university and community agencies all together in the same room.
 - Support efforts to create university-wide structures to support Aboriginal programming and linkages. Aboriginal communities are all major users of adult education. In western Canada, they are also a growing population and they bring skills and perspectives that can in fact help our institutions more respectfully engage with our communities.
 - Take an active role in theory and practice spaces that have grown up around CBR such as the Community-University Expositions (<http://cuexpo08.ca>) and Community-Based Research Canada (<http://www.uvic.ca/ocbr>) and at the International level the Living Knowledge Network (<http://www.scienceshops.org>) and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health network (<http://www.ccph.info>).
 - Get your university to sign onto the Talloires Declaration (<http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork>) and the Global University Network for

Innovation (<http://www.guni-rmies.net>). Both these are free and provide access to fascinating networks of energy and action.

- Join with others in your university and community on discussions on the “greening” of your campus. Common Energy is a student-led initiative about sustainability and going beyond carbon-neutral on our campuses. Green strategies demand community engagement and should have a strong adult education and learning framework (<http://www.commonenergy.org>).

The opportunity to facilitate change presented by universities and colleges is the reason that we have chosen to work with them to achieve our goal of creating a future with a climate that will support a diversity of life and prosperous societies. There are other institutions that can go beyond climate neutral, indeed it is possible for the individual to do so, however, universities and colleges are unique because of the diversity of effects they can have.

Mission Statement of Common Energy, University of Victoria, B.C.

- Help in the fight for recognition of community-based research as part of the merit review and tenure and promotion criteria in your universities. Carleton University’s Faculty of Public Affairs, the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and the University of Victoria Guidelines (<http://www.uvic.ca/ocbr/resources>) can be a place to start.

Some final thoughts

I am indebted to David Watson of the Institute of Education at the University of London for his bringing to my attention the character of Jude, in the Thomas Hardy book *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Jude is a poor stonemason determined to become a scholar of note. In the course of his self-directed learning, he decides that Oxford University would be the place to engaged with his fellow scholars. The resistance offered by the Oxford of the day to Jude’s efforts to learn amongst them is brutal. Hardy does however capture some of the difficulties that are still associated with adult and lifelong learning in our universities. Watson writes of the challenge that universities have of establishing an appropriate balance between intellectual rigour and the respect for experience (2009, 102). Hardy tells the story of Jude’s thrill of seeing the spires of Oxford but ultimately learning that it was not ready for the self-taught intellectual. The Master of Balliol College tells Jude, “I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere” (Hardy, 1895:117). Jude begins to understand the differences between the knowledge of the community and the knowledge of the academy, “He (Jude) began to see that town life was a book of humanity infinitely more palpitating, varied and compendious than the gown-life” (118). In the end, Jude tells Arabella, his wife, “I love the place...although I know it hates all men like me---the so-called self-taught---...Perhaps it will soon wake up and be generous. I pray so!” (320).

Community-engagement or civic engagement is part of the deepest fabric of Canadian higher education and continuing education. We have grown up literally hearing about and studying about the early days of the Extension Department of the

University of Alberta, the fabled and storied Antigonish Movement from St. Francis Xavier, the links between the Worker's Education Association and the University of Toronto of the 1930s, and the Living Room Learning of the University of British Columbia of the 1950s. The ways that universities engage with communities are being redefined as we come up to the end of the first decade of the 21st Century. In the end the words we use may be different. There are already many new players in the civic and community engagement game and given the strength of the forces that lie behind these changes, more players still will come forward. Continuing Education and Continuing Educators are perfectly placed to be central to these transformations. As Jude notes, I pray so!

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