PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATORS IN A CANADIAN LEARNING SOCIETY

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Integrated Studies Project

Submitted to Dr. Michael Welton in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

May, 2008
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Introduction

In the latter part of the twentieth century, adult education has experienced a meteoric rise to prominence. This heightened interest in adult education can be attributed to rapid social and technological changes, which has led many adults to seek out additional training or retraining (Candy, 1981). While much of adult education today is closely tied to the needs of work and global capitalism, there is also within its roots, a strong tradition of social change. From the importation of the Mechanics’ Institute from Britain in 1827, to the Antigonish Movement in the early 1900s, adult educators have traditionally “framed their work in the language of social justice, citizenship and participatory democracy” (Conrad, 2001, p.204). This education for economy versus education for social change dichotomy has led many to question what the goals of adult educators should be. Whether one is a proponent of education for social change or education for economy, there is no question that:

Adult education is, indeed burgeoning. Never before has there been so much talk about ‘learning’ – and not only about learning for children, but learning for all members of society, organizational units, business, and even society as a whole. This is not to say that it has never happened before, but now such learning – which hitherto has been informal – is being measured, quantified, certified, recognized, and actively promoted. (Finger & Asun, 2001, p.1)

As we enter the twenty-first century, Canadian society can be described as one in which learning is central to its economic, social and democratic life (Shuller,
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Schütze & Istance, 2002), in other words, a learning society. A learning society is one in which the promotion and process of learning is the function of society as a whole – not solely under the jurisdiction of literacy agencies, schools, colleges, and so on. Within a learning society, the concept of lifelong learning becomes:

[The] organizing principle and social goal as the learning resources of every one of the five sectors of the community – civic, economic (private-corporate enterprise), public (e.g. libraries, museums, health and social agencies), education, and voluntary – are mobilized to foster environmentally sustainable economic development and social inclusion. (Faris, 2003, p.2)

The goal of a learning society is the voluntary participation of adults in learning activities throughout their lifespan, so that the “knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of those who contribute to the civic, public, economic, education and voluntary life of their communities – are mobilized” (Faris, 2003, p.2).

In the learning society, adult education has many important purposes, including “empowerment of learners, increased competence of those who work and live in a rapidly changing society, promotion of critical thinking skills, and facilitation of adult learning” (Sork & Welock, 1992, p.116). Consequently, it is crucial that adult educators possess the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to perform effectively. However, as Welton (2006) argues:

[I]t is deeply misleading for contemporary policy makers and educators to imagine that thinking about the relationship between adult learning and the domains of work, civil society, state, and person, or the relationship between adult learning and the great challenges posed by the age, is peculiar to our Information Age. (p.24)

Since the learning society ideal and lifelong learning are not new concepts tied to
our information age, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which Canadians joined collectively to become “enlightened about the causes of their suffering and were learning how to gain power and act to change their life situations in the early twentieth century” (Welton, 2006, p.25). As such, much of the social, cooperative learning that has happened in Canada has been facilitated through voluntary organizations and been championed by ordinary (or as some would rightly argue, extraordinary) men and women, with little or no professional training in formal adult education techniques and methods.

Nevertheless, as we enter the twenty-first century, information and knowledge have become the driving forces behind our knowledge-based economy. Individuals are engaging in learning for the purpose of self development, and also to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to survive in this new age (Livingstone, 2001). This need for knowledge, training and retraining is supported by Livingstone’s (2000) assertion that the average Canadian adult spends 15 hours per week on informal learning, and Tough’s (2002) claim that “the number of people who have done some sort of intentional learning in the last year...[is] somewhere around 90%” (p.1). According to Candy (1981), the phenomenal growth in adult education activities has resulted in increased demand for more, and better trained, adult educators. This demand for better trained adult educators has sparked debate in the adult education community, as to whether adult educators should be more professionalized. “Few issues have touched off more heated debate in adult and continuing
education than the question of whether the field should strive toward increased professionalization” (Brockett, 1991, p.5). Professionalization, “is normally understood to refer to the process whereby an occupation increasingly meets the criteria attributed to a profession” (Hoyle, 1982, p.161).

A profession is an occupation that seeks to regulate itself by (a) developing a consensus concerning what its practitioners must know and be able to do and (b) developing an accreditation and licensing system to ensure the transmission of that knowledge and skill. (Wise, 2005, p.318)

While history has witnessed the professionalization of a variety of occupations, including medicine and law, the issue of increased professionalization in adult education continues to be a subject of debate. “Today, debates ensue about adult education's professionalization. Claims are levied that, with the present state of professionalization in adult education, the field is dislodging itself from the social thrusts of its roots” (Alexander, 1991, p.121). However, despite such views, there are many who believe adult educators should pursue a path toward increased professionalization. According to Crandall (1994), adult ESL educators would benefit from professionalization because it would “serve to validate practitioners' existing knowledge, skills and experiences” (p.2). It has also been argued that professionalization “can only improve the quality of the adult education delivered, is desirable, and has limited potential disadvantages” (Alexander, 1991, p.121).

Professionalization of Canadian adult educators is a complex issue. There are numerous arguments for and against increased professionalization of
Canadian adult educators ranging from, improved performance of adult educators and consumer protection, to the dangers associated with our obsession with technique and methodology. However, it is my contention that in order to truly understand the debate regarding increased professionalization, we must not only examine the arguments for and against, but also take a step back and examine professionalization from a historical perspective, in terms of the evolution of the professional ideology and what it means to be deemed a professional. By examining the ways in which the professional ideology perpetuates an elitist societal structure and monopolizes what counts as knowledge, I will illustrate the ways in which these ‘expert cultures’ become increasingly removed from the lifeworld and consequently the learning society. Furthermore, through an examination of the historical evolution of adult education in Canada, I will argue that professionalization runs contrary to the historical social tradition of adult education in Canada, and the tenets of the learning society ideal. Building upon this historical foundation, I will examine what educators, learners and society as a whole, stand to lose if educators continue to pursue a path of increased professionalization. In doing so, I will advocate for a reconceptualization of what it means to be a professional adult educator, educating adults in a learning society where they do not have a monopoly on teaching and learning. It is only when adult educators come to understand their role in a learning society that they will be able to achieve the professionalism that so many aspire too.
The Rise of Professionalism and the Professional Ideology

When examining the rise of professionalism and the professional ideology, it is important to understand what distinguishes a profession from other occupations. “A large number of attempts have been made to define the nature of professions. One approach has been to identify the attributes, ‘traits’ or characteristics, which distinguish professions from other job occupations” (Tobias, 2003, p.446). According to Greenwood (1966), professions are distinguishable because they possess the following traits/characteristics: (1) a systematic body of theory, (2) authority recognized by the clientele of the professional group, (3) broader community sanction and approval of this authority, (4) a code of ethics regulating relations of professional persons with clients and colleagues, and (5) a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations. In addition to Greenwood’s list, it is also important to add a sixth distinguishing trait, and that is the characteristic of exercising exclusive autonomy over designated areas of practical knowledge (Collins, 1992).

The origins of professionalization date back to the Enlightenment when the ultimate power and authority of God was displaced by the power and authority of science. When we think about traditional professions in Western society, it is the three great professions of divinity, law, and medicine that frequently come to mind (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1966). These ‘learned’ or ‘liberal’ professions date back to the medieval universities and beyond (Gidney &
This association with higher education has traditionally been one of the hallmarks of a profession. Because such an education was limited to the aristocracy, these historical professions could only be taken up by privileged men who belonged to the 'respectable' classes. Gidney and Millar (1994) state:

The title 'profession', was an indication of the social ranking of particular occupations, or even of similar distinctions among those who might practice the same craft skill. What conferred privileges upon barristers, physicians, and clergymen was not simply the nature of the work and the conditions under which it was carried out, but the fact that these occupations were taken up by gentlemen, by those who had acquired a liberal education, by those who had claims to belong to the respectable classes. To study the professions,….is to study not just the world of work and occupations but also Weber's triad of status, class and power – and, one might add, gender as well. (p.12)

When examining the historical origins of the 'learned' professions, it is important to understand that they were closely bound to the stratification system. “For the learned professions, establishment and social standing were equivalent to their association with the elites and with the state” (Larson, 1977, p.3). Furthermore, the history of these professions was not one of selfless public service, but rather a record of the development of increasing social and cultural authority. According to Porter (1965), the “ranking of individuals or groups in an order of inferiority or superiority is a universal feature of social life” (p.7). As such, these 'learned' professions made their services a medium of exchange for the desirable resources of status, power and compensation (Popkewitz, 1994). Therefore, what we see is a strong historical relationship between learned professions and an elitist societal structure.
The rise of professionalism can be linked to the convergence of several key factors including the Industrial Revolution comprising the subsequent scientific ‘explosion’, competitive capitalism, an emerging urban middle class, and a movement toward professional organization. Between 1750 and 1850, “there was in this period a radical shift in the structure of the economy, in the composition of total output, and in the distribution of employment” (Hartwell, 1965, p.181). With the Industrial Revolution came an unprecedented acceleration in the annual rates of population growth and a shift in the distribution of labour from agricultural to manufacturing, which contributed to the sustained growth of cities and towns (Larson, 1977). “The sheer growth of the non-farm, non-manual workforce, along with its increasing differentiation, provided others with new occupational identities and new opportunities to fulfill their economic and social aspirations” (Gidney & Millar, 1994, p.204). Along with increased urbanization and new occupational opportunities, this period of economic and social change also brought improved literacy and communication through the development of road networks, railways, the telegraph, the multiplication of periodicals and newspapers, and the organization of a postal system (Larson, 1977). “Urbanization and improved communications were breaking the isolation of large numbers of provincial practitioners” (Larson, 1997, p.12), and creating a new social order.

Modern professions made themselves into special and value kind of occupations during the ‘great transformation’ which changed the structure and character of European societies and their overseas offshoots. This transformation was dominated by the
Furthermore, the Industrial Revolution heralded a scientific explosion and a new found reliance on scientific knowledge, now placed irrevocably in the service of self and societal improvements. According to Habermas (as cited in Briton, 1996), this unmitigated faith in scientific method, dubbed ‘scientism’, is “the conviction that we can no longer understand science as one form of knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science” (p.38). The application of scientific knowledge to practical problems would become the new order of the day. As such it became the means through which professional competence was achieved and upon which their social authority was founded (Larson, 1977; Popkewitz, 1994). According to Larson (1977), this dependence on ‘objectively’ legitimized competence is characteristic of the modern profession and dates back to the ‘great transformation’, which became visible in England toward the end of the eighteenth century. This resulted in the expansion of universities worldwide, as a university education began to take on an even greater significance. Harold Perkin (1989) comments:

Since the rise of professional society was a worldwide phenomenon generated by the application of scientific expertise not only to industry but to all activities of society, the expansion of the universities, the powerhouses of research and ideas as well as the producers of professional experts, was equally international. (p.451)

Competitive capitalism, the reorganization of the economy and society around the market, also contributed to the rise of professionalism. “The
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growth of professions and the professionalization of successive occupations [is] one aspect of the rationalization of capitalism...an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources – special knowledge and skills – into another – social and economic rewards" (Larson as cited in Tobias, 2003, pp.448-449).

With these economic changes, came a change in traditional concepts of social order. No longer could society be neatly divided into the gentry, whose status came from wealth and power, the business class comprised of shopkeepers and clerks, and the undifferentiated masses. The outcome of the Industrial Revolution and competitive capitalism was the formation of a new urban middle class who:

From the late 1840s onwards, would not only increase its numbers but become steadily more fine-grained, differentiated both vertically and horizontally. Its very expansion would also undermine the certitudes held by an earlier generation...about the natural ordering of society and about the distribution of prestige within the occupational hierarchies. (Gidney & Millar, 1994, p.204)

Increased manufacturing, competitive markets, and the expansion of the middle class brought new and varied businesses requiring more managers, administrators, office workers and supervisors, leading to an increase in the size and number of professions. “The importance of the professions and the professional classes can hardly be overrated, they form the head of the great English middle class” (Perkin, 1989, p.84).

The impact of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism resulted in an increase in the number and types of occupations available. “With the growth of
modern industry there has appeared an infinitely more complex hierarchy of skill” (Porter, 1965, p.8). While professions like medicine, law and divinity were solidly established in the Middle Ages, it was not until the nineteenth century that we see new professions like dentistry, architecture, and some areas of engineering begin to achieve recognition (Carr-Saunders, 1966). As the number of professions began to expand during the first half of the century, the second half of the century heralded the implementation of legal regulations related to professions, as exemplified by the passing of the Medical Act. Moreover, the second half of the century also saw the rise of numerous new professions, especially those relating to the land, to teaching, to administration and to techniques associated with business. As new professions emerged, practitioners were moved by the recognition of common interests to form professional associations. With improved communication, practitioners were no longer isolated and professional organization leaders began fostering a sense of common identity and shared interests among like professionals. This was evidenced by the foundation of the Surveyor’s Institute in 1868, the National Union of Teachers in 1870, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1880 (Carr-Saunders, 1966).

Amid expanding markets, professions and their organizational leaders were in a unique position because unlike early capitalist industries, they were not trying to exploit existing markets, but rather were working to create them (Larson, 1977). Further to this, gaining public confidence became one of the
main tasks of the professions during this period of transformation (Gidney & Millar, 1994). Selection based on merit and long arduous training, rather than on inherited wealth and social status, became the new order of the day as professions started moving against traditional monopolies over titles and licenses to practice. In Gidney and Millar’s words:

There was also a politics of change, as occupations actively tried to shape or reshape their place in the world. A growing number of individuals engaging in the same occupation, the steady urbanization of the workforce, and the increasing ease of transportation and communication bred a sense of common identity and shared interests. The result was the ubiquitous craft and trade associations of the later nineteenth century. (p.307)

Therefore as we can see, this period of economic and social transformation, contributed greatly to the rise of professionalism in Western society, and honed the criteria that shape the traditional view of a profession, namely, remuneration, social status, autonomous or authoritative power, and service (Pratte & Rury, 1991, as cited in Abdal-Haqq, 1992). By examining what it means to be deemed a professional and the ways in which professionalization has evolved, what we see is the creation of a new elite class – the professional class.

The construction of class categories is simply a process of classification by which units which are similar in some respect are grouped together for the purpose of description and analysis.….The most commonly used objective criteria of class are income, occupation, property ownership, and education, all of which are ways of expressing objective economic differences among members of society. (Porter, 1965, pp.9-10)

Thus, we see the ways in which professionalization and the professional ideology
perpetuate an elitist societal structure and a monopoly on human need. Illich (1977) argues:

Professionals tell you what you need and claim the power to prescribe. They not only recommend what is good, but actually ordain what is right. It is his authority to define a person as client, to determine that person's need and to hand the person a prescription. This professional authority comprises three roles: the sapient authority to advise, instruct and direct; the moral authority that makes its acceptance not just useful but obligatory; and charismatic authority that allows the professional to appeal to some supreme interest of his client that not only outranks conscience but sometimes even the raison d’etat. (pp.17-18)

The elitist structure and expert/client relationship that is perpetuated by professionalism and the professional ideology is severely problematic for adult education in a learning society. As Illich (1977) describes, the professional ideology sets up an expert-dependant relationship, and this directly conflicts with the model of adult education in the Canadian learning society. Canadian adult education was founded upon a tradition of citizenship and voluntary action. Early adult education initiatives, namely, Frontier College, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Radio Forum and the Women’s Institute exemplify a tradition of ordinary men and women working cooperatively to empower others and improve life within their communities. The individuals leading these initiatives were not experts coming in to prescribe to individuals and their community what must be done, but rather were volunteers engaging their friends and neighbours in order to increase individual choices, empower, and improve their quality of life (Draper, 1998; Selman, 1998; Welton, 1998). In addition, as adult education in the Canadian learning society has evolved, self-directed learning has become its
cornerstone. As Garrison (1997) aptly states, “self-directed learning is a central concept in the study and practice of adult education…In this conception, the learner exercises a great deal of independence in deciding what is worthwhile to learn and how to approach the learning process” (p.18). However, such independence and autonomy runs contrary to the consumerism and expert/client prescriptive relationship inherent in professionalization. Welton (2005) argues that:

Both consumerism and the therapeutic culture, at their deepest level, undermine the central pedagogical aim of the just learning society paradigm: to create authentically empowered persons inhabiting lifeworlds that compel the system domains to respond to their needs and aspirations. (pp.187-188)

Furthermore, the professional social ideal is based on the primacy of expert service and exclusive access to knowledge. Whereas pre-industrial society was based on inherited wealth and industrial society on acquired capital, professional society is based on human capital created by education and enhanced by strategies of exclusivity, which sets out to control the supply of expertise (Perkin, 1989). According to Habermas (as cited in Welton, 2005), this elitist separation of expert cultures from contexts of communicative action in daily life is extremely problematic. “With the rise of ‘expert culture’ – specialists monopolise various competencies – knowledge is blocked from flowing into the various channels of the lifeworld” (p.200). Therefore, not only do ‘expert cultures’ monopolise competence, but they also fail to integrate these various forms of expertise into the lifeworld. Consequently, as experts move in to take over
management of the lifeworld, people become further removed from the dreams of the Enlightenment – namely, the infusion of science into their daily lives.

Welton (2005) warns:

At risk for the just learning society paradigm is the core teaching of Enlightenment humanism: that human beings are active creators of their own existence, able to take risks, to imagine alternative worlds beyond the limited ones we inhabit. (p.202)

In addition to a monopoly on competence and the subsequent failure to migrate these forms of expertise into the lifeworld, professionalization further contributes to the disenchantment of society through the ascendancy of scientific knowledge or instrumental reason. According to Taylor (as cited in Briton, 1996), instrumental reason is “the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end” (p.112). When we begin to privilege technical-instrumental forms of reasoning to the exclusion of other forms of knowing (Habermas, as cited in Welton, 2005), “the world and its creatures become open to being treated as raw materials or instruments for our projects” (Briton, 1996, p.112). Furthermore, when we start to take for granted a technocratic ideology then system imperatives inevitably engulf lifeword interests (Collins, 1995). As Collins (1995) articulates:

[I]t is clear that the preservation of what is vital in our everyday life, especially the capacities for self-direction, depends upon the will to defend its autonomy against further encroachments by disabling system imperatives. Such a commitment could be well supported by appropriate initiatives for the reclamation of valuable community-oriented aspects of everyday life…those constantly threatened, yet still non-commodified customs, practical activities, and generative locations in our everyday lives which are so essential to our well-being. (1995, pp.79-80)
Although it is fair to say that instrumental reason is an adequate model to understand those domains of practice that involve communicative forms of action, it can never tell us anything pertaining to morality, ethics or spirituality and thus our lifeworld. Communicative action is fundamental to adult education. This is highlighted by Welton (1995) in his reference to Habermas’ theory of communicative action:

[T]he full accomplishment of human individuation requires rational structures that permit ‘non-distorted communication’ and concrete opportunities to exercise autonomy and responsibility. His theory of communicative action, therefore, has important implications for critical educational practices. Dialogue and communicative action oriented to reaching a consensus in an uncoerced and free exchange (study circles, tutorial classes) has always been historically pivotal to the adult education movement. (p.136)

When individuals engage in communicative action, “then each of us can speak frankly and openly, examine, test and revise our own and others’ views of the world, and act on and change both ourselves and the social world of which we are a part” (Newman, 1999, p.52). However, what we find in a professionalization model is the primacy of instrumental reason which equates scientific rationality with rationality (Briton, 1996) and leads “to the narrowing and flattening of our lives, to the loss of resonance, depth, or richness in our human surroundings” (Taylor as cited in Briton, 1996, p.113).

Lastly, to be deemed a professional is to be in a recognized position of authority or power. According to Porter (1965) “people in power roles belong to elite” (p.207), and power “means the recognized right to make effective decisions
on behalf of a group of people” (p.201), thus setting up relations of dependency. The power differential created by the professional elite is directly opposed to the goal of emancipatory participation of all citizens in a democratic learning society. “Emancipatory participation in critical discourse and reflective action is both the means and the goal of adult education, of adult development, and of social action in a democratic society” (Mezirow, 1995, p.69). Such emancipatory ideals become difficult to achieve if we create a monopoly over education whereby the new organized specialist is capable of telling “society what must be learned, and are in a position to write off as valueless what has been learned outside of school” (Illich, 1977, p.15). This type of power is reminiscent of Illich’s (1977) sapient and moral authority that not only instructs and directs but also makes acceptance of such authority obligatory. However, for adult educators, such authority not only runs contrary to the volunteer and citizenship tradition of adult education in Canada, and the emancipatory participation of all citizens in the learning society, but also further removes adult educators from the lifeworld. As Collins (1995) argues, it is only when educators distance themselves from the quest to professionalize that they are willing to “acknowledge that emancipatory learning requires on-going struggle within institutionalized settings and communities at large” (p.80). Therefore, what we see with professionalization and the professional ideology are the ways in which professionals become increasingly removed from the lifeworld and consequently, the learning society.

Within the wider context, as we have seen, the concept of ‘profession’ is, in fact, not an innocent one. It is, in Larson’s words,
'one of many “natural concepts”, fraught with ideology, that social science abstracts from everyday life'. It is a concept that has been used to shape the material and social conditions of vast numbers of people through the 20th century. (Tobias, 2003, p.451)

To summarize, the rise of professionalism and the professional ideology has a long and complex history. The term profession refers to an ideal type of occupational institution (Carr-Saunders, 1966), and its roots date as far back as the Middle Ages, when educated gentlemen pursued the professions of divinity, law and medicine. During this period, profession was synonymous with status, wealth and power. It was not until the Industrial Revolution, with the rise of capitalism and a new urban middle class that we begin to see a proliferation in the number and type of professions available, resulting in a thrust toward increased professionalization. This increase in professionalization resulted in the creation of a new social order; one based on human capital and specialized expertise, rather than inherited wealth and acquired capital.

As society was becoming more professionalized, the professional social ideal began to take hold. The professional social ideal is based on the primacy of expert service and exclusive access to specialized, technical based knowledge. Issues of status, power and compensation continue to be driving forces behind this ideal and thus perpetuate an elitist societal structure and a monopoly on human need. Consequently, the inherent nature of professionalization and the professional ideology are extremely problematic for adult educators in the learning society. Specifically, professionalization runs contrary to our traditions of citizen and voluntary action in adult education in
Canada, and also conflicts with the concepts of self-directed learning and emancipatory participation. Moreover, these ‘expert cultures’ block knowledge from flowing into the various channels of the lifeworld, and offer nothing in relation to morality, ethics, spirituality or communicative action. Therefore, when we examine professionalization through a learning society lens, what we see are the innate dangers associated with professionalization and how such a pursuit would increasingly remove adult educators from the lifeworld, and consequently subvert the ideals of the learning society.

**Historical Tradition of Canadian Adult Education**

According to Welton (1998), the past is usable because “it provides a critical vantage-point from which to view the present” (p.36). By taking a historical perspective, we have seen how the evolution of professionalism and the professional ideology conflict with adult education and the tenets of a learning society by further removing it from the lifeworld. In keeping with this historical lens, we also see that:

Histories of adult education have by and large been histories of adult education organizations, and so have paid little attention to the extraordinary amount of non-formal and informal education and learning taking place in people’s working, community and family lives. (Newman, 1999, p.219)

When we examine the progression of adult education in Canada, it becomes evident that professionalization runs contrary to not only the learning society ideal, but also to our rich social tradition of adult education; a tradition which laid the foundation for the practice of adult education in Canada. The
history and development of formal adult education in Canada can be traced back as far as the early 1800s. “Adult education as a concept was not formally practiced in Canada until the 1830s with the establishment of the Mechanics’ Institute and the Danish folkschools” (Burton & Point, 2006, p.39). However, it is important to note that prior to the introduction of formal adult education, learning has always been a part of the everyday lives of Canadians. It was not until the eighteenth century that we begin to see a shift from learning to make a living, live a life, and respond to situations dictated by the environment, to the gradual appearance of formal educational initiatives. It was during this time that individuals, drawing on scientific ways of understanding the world, began to try and ‘educate’ those around them, be they labourers, farmers, or women, for the purpose of creating and sustaining pedagogical social and learning spaces that would enable individuals to gain some mastery over their life situations. Thus what we see is the early beginnings of a social democratic tradition of adult education in Canada. Helterbran (1999) states:

Lifelong learners have been with us always, as have attempts to provide opportunities for these learners to exercise their yearnings to learn. Adult education as an entity became increasingly available in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Programs were developed to provide learning opportunities for the lower and middle classes – that is, for those individuals whom education came only as a direct result of personal effort to seek out opportunities to learn. (p.14)

Therefore, formal adult education in Canada since its inception has had strong ties to citizenship education. Selman (1998) defines citizenship education as:
Educational activities aimed at encouraging adults to feel a responsibility for playing an active part in the decision-making processes of their society and equipping them with political and social information and skills so that they might play such a role effectively. (p.24)

According to Welton (1998), the Canadian tradition of adult education lies in its civil societarian focus. Early educators engaged with ordinary Canadians in their struggle to find new ways of making sense of their world and new solutions to the problems associated with industrialization, capitalism and urbanization. As Canadians found themselves faced with the demands of a new, unfamiliar and often exploitative kind of society, early educators created learning sites that would enable them to gain mastery over their life situations. This is evidenced by several noteworthy Canadian adult education movements, namely Frontier College, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Forum and the Women’s Institute.

The establishment of Frontier College in 1899 by Alfred Fitzpatrick, “represented eminently pragmatic responses to the human needs of the frontier” (Cook, 1987, p.35). Fitzpatrick recognized a need amongst unskilled and uneducated labourers, “working in virtual isolation and cut off from even the most rudimentary social and educational services that were beginning to be offered in cities and towns” (Cook, p.36). Many of the labourers working in mining, lumber, and railway camps on the Canadian frontier were new immigrants and thus ignorant about the nature of Canadian society. Moreover, the very nature of camp life - the isolation, lack of recreational, cultural and spiritual facilities, the
unsanitary health conditions, and the sheer tedium of camp life - left the men both mentally sluggish and passive and thus powerless to advocate for change (Cook, 1987).

While Fitzpatrick reflected the universal principle “that education was a God-given right of every man, not the exclusive privilege of a few favoured persons” (Welton, 2001, p.312), and that it was the primary duty of the state to educate, neither the Dominion nor the provincial governments recognized their duty (Cook, 1987). Although the magnitude of the problem facing frontier men could only be dealt with through the power of the state, it was Fitzpatrick’s belief that “the vitality of society could be rejuvenated solely by the individual’s spirit of service” (Cook, p.41). Thus, he appealed to others, especially young, university men, to take up the challenge of service to their fellow man and become labourer-teachers, teaching these men our ideas of citizenship and our ideals for life (Cook, 1987). As we can see, the work of Alfred Fitzpatrick exemplifies the strong social tradition of adult education in Canada and the ways in which early educators worked to open learning spaces so as to create their vision of a participatory democracy. Draper (1998) captures the spirit of Canadian adult education when he states:

The history of adult education [in Canada] is the story of men and women; of agencies and institutions; of values, causes, and movements; of beliefs; and of relationships between individuals and nations. One can see that the history of adult education has consisted of continuing attempts to increase individual choices, empowerment, and the improvement in the quality of life. (p.37)

Another example of education for social change is the Antigonish
Movement. Working through St. Francis Xavier University, Father Moses M. Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins “mounted a program of education about co-operative organizations and credit unions through which people of the region could, by working together, improve their economic and general living conditions” (Selman, 1998, p.27). According to Lotz and Welton (as cited in Spencer, 1998), the interwar recession years experienced by the Maritime provinces, culminating in a long series of depressions and depopulation, resulted in working people being “receptive to arguments for alternative ways of creating and organizing work” (p.32). Those involved in the Antigonish Movement believed that what people needed was to find their voice and break out of their ‘culture of silence’ and “that persons, awakened through education, would develop the strategies for co-operative economic institutions” (Lotz & Welton, 1987, p.105).

The official beginning of the Antigonish Movement came in 1928 when St. Francis Xavier University opened an Extension Department, and it reached its peak in 1938, when it received official Papal approval (Lotz & Welton, 1987). The Movement encouraged people to take direct action in their local communities, to work toward solutions to their own problems, in order to improve their economic and general living conditions. It represented a “process of personal and collective empowerment” (Lotz & Welton, p.107), that worked from the ground up to change conditions within communities. In short, the Antigonish Movement was essentially a community development movement. “As social learning, community development engages people whose lives are negatively
affected by circumstances that were previously beyond their understanding and control” (MacNeil, 1997, p.152). It embodies the principles of education with a civil societarian focus, as individuals learn through group activity to define their problems, decide upon solutions and then act to achieve those solutions (MacNeil, 1997). As individuals progress, they gain new knowledge and skills and thus become empowered learners paving “the way for greater social equality and responsible participation in society and the democratic process” (Helterbran, 1999, p.2), thereby meeting the goals of and for a learning society.

The National Farm Radio Forum launched in 1940, represents yet another example of citizenship education, in Canada. As its name suggests, the National Farm Radio Forum was addressed mainly to Canadians living in small towns and rural areas of the country (Selman, 1998). The Forum engaged citizens to consider a range of issues related to family and community life, agricultural policy, international trade, as well as a variety of political, economic, social and cultural issues (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998; Selman, 1998). The Forum provided a feedback mechanism whereby citizen groups could report their views about the subject presented to the provincial secretary, who would then report on the nature of the groups’ reactions to the previous week’s topic (Selman, 1998). It also provided a vehicle through which citizens could suggest topics to be included in the series. The National Farm Radio Forum “stands with the Antigonish Movement as one of the best-known contributions made by Canada to the development of methodologies in adult education” (Selman, p.29).
It is representative of the ways in which individuals work collectively to create a just learning society. “Through these social learning processes, individuals combined their intelligence. The early twentieth century agrarian movements enacted a form of a just learning society” (Welton, 2006, p.25).

The final example of education for social change that had its origins in Canada is the Women’s Institute. “A great deal of what may appropriately be termed citizenship education has been carried out over the decades by voluntary organizations” (Selman, 1998, p.32), and the Women’s Institute is an extraordinary example of this. The Women’s Institute was founded in 1897 in Stoney Creek, Ontario by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless. It was originally formed as a means of educating rural women for the purpose of improving their lives and that of their families, through the study of domestic science. “Adelaide Hoodless was a woman of vision, with the courage and ability to fight for a broader education of women. She regarded the promotion of home economics as a means of elevating women’s work to the level of a profession and to put it on par with a man’s work” (Voluntary Action History Society, nd, p.2). According to Hoodless, “A nation cannot rise above the level of its homes, we women must work and study together to raise our homes to the highest level possible” (as cited in the Women’s Institute). Hoodless believed that just as men had a Farmer’s Institute, so too should women have an organization of their own to assist them in improving “their equally important domestic practices” (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.169). Denninson (1987) states:
Women shared the prevailing viewpoints that humanity was progressing and that all of the society’s problems could be solved by educating people to the need for a change. Reason, efficiency, and science would bring about a more perfect society in the future. These attitudes, their awakening public consciousness, and their housewives’ ideology were all contributing factors in rural women’s acceptance of the Women’s Institute. (p.54)

Frontier College, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Radio Forum, and the Women’s Institute are examples of citizenship education and epitomize Canada’s rich tradition of education for social change. Welton (2006) sees an incipient learning society vision in these early to mid-twentieth century projects:

The pre-eminent social movements of the early twentieth century – labour, cooperative, farm, women – created learning infrastructures to counter the desolation of mediocre common schools and nothing much for adult learners. This vision of a just learning society was embodied primarily in the creative innovations of men and women in the various movements. (p.24)

What is more, is that the men and women involved in these adult education movements recognized that “a better world did not just happen; it had to be created and sustained by vigorous learning processes” (Welton, 2005, p.26). Moreover, it was up to the ordinary, common citizen to work together to create the learning infrastructure that best met their needs. These famous adult education visionaries recognized “that formal schooling did not turn out the ‘finished product’, and that ‘work activity’ and the associative life of civil society had a deep ‘educational effect for the adult’” (Welton, 2005, p.27). They introduced the idea of mutual instruction and mobilized people at a grassroots
level to reflect collectively on their situation and devise solutions to their problems. These uniquely Canadian examples illustrate that “lifelong learners have always been with us, as have attempts to provide opportunities for these learners to exercise their yearnings to learn” (Helterbran, 1999, p.14).

In so far as the early twentieth century marked an era of citizenship education and social learning in Canada, the era between World Wars I and II was critical in the development of adult education as a field of practice. During the 1930s, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) was formed signaling a more professional approach to adult education (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998). Moreover, it was during this period that we begin to see the signs that adult education was shifting from an “idealistic phase, in which the education of adults was seen to be the purpose of transforming society, to a more practical approach” (Cotton as cited in Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.297). As Selman (1998) notes:

Whereas at one time adult education was inspired and to a large degree led by people who saw the field as a means of bringing social change, ….the field seems to have shifted its vision from the improvement of society to providing services to individuals. (pp.33-34)

The period following WWII ushered in an era of education for technical training and education for economy. It was during the 1950s that a sense of professionalism began to emerge as opportunities for acquiring training in adult education expanded and attempts were made to convince both adult educators and their employers that such training was desirable (Selman, Cooke, Selman, &
Dampier, 1998; Spencer, 1998). In addition, we see the expansion of provision by public authorities, with local and provincial governments becoming actively involved in the field. Perhaps what was most significant about this period was how the aims of adult education changed. The aims of adult education shifted “from need based on observable deficiencies, in language or other areas, to need based on vocational training and professional advancement” (Conrad, 2001, p.205). As Rockhill (1985) affirms:

Not only was it the period when the professional and institutional bases of adult education were carved out of the educational landscape, but, most significantly, the ideology of the dawning ‘profession’ was solidified. The professional, the institutional and the ideological premises of the new movement reinforced one another ultimately divorcing adult education from its birth place – in social movements – and moving into the realm of established educational systems. (p.207)

The economic, technical and social changes of the mid 1970s through to today, resulting from increased globalization has had a profound affect on adult education in Canada. The shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy has forced a new direction for adult education. Whereas, the formerly distinctive Canadian tradition of education for social change, “of which citizenship education – the development of an informed and involved public voice – was such an important strand” (Haughey, 1998, p.200), has shifted to one that responds to the needs of the individual and the market. Hake (as cited in Welton, 1995) notes that the field of adult education “has undergone a metamorphosis during the transition from its origins in social movements and voluntary associations, through its recognition as a public service, toward its
current status as a market-place for educational products and potential consumers” (p.130). This is further supported by Briton (as cited in Welton, 2001) who states:

As a relatively unrestrained market expansion has become ascendant over the last decade or so, adult education has been under tremendous pressure to couple its caboose to the corporate training and development agenda that accentuates cost cutting and hyper-efficiency and downplays a people-centred agenda. Everywhere adult educators are talking marketspeak, and lifelong learning comes to mean the lifelong adaptation of isolated, individual learners to the status quo. (p.7)

Furthermore, this period is marked by the formal academic training of adult educators and specialists (Hrimech & Tremblay, 2006), where advanced degrees and formal training in adult education have become the norm. Selman (as cited in Haughey, 1998) claims that the social reform tradition of adult education in Canada has faded into the background as the field becomes more professionalized and institutionalized. It is Selman’s assertion that this trend has less to do with the economy and more to do with “a more professionalized staff who accept and promote this approach” (p.207).

While the history of citizenship education and education for social change has been an eminent feature of adult education in Canada, the developments of the latter part of the twentieth century have worked to alter this tradition. “A professionalized modern practice of adult education abandons its connections to social movements and lends its weight to the world of specialization – the system” (Collins, 1995, p.79). Specialization, however, is problematic as it further removes adult educators from the lifeworld. Newman (1999) reminds us,
The lifeworld denotes those myriad shared understandings upon which we construct our lives and upon which we base our interactions with others. It is made up of those convictions, assumptions and presuppositions which we take for granted and which, for the most part, we do not even consciously consider in the course of our daily lives. (p.143)

As educators pursue a path to increased professionalization, Welton “graphically describes how the professionalizing tendency ‘neglects social, cultural and political dimensions of adult education’” (as cited in Collins, 1995, p.93). Thus, as educators engage in the world of specialization, they become part of the system that “reproduces itself in the subjectivity of men and women” (Welton, 1995, p.13), and therefore subverts emancipatory participation in critical discourse. As Newman (1999) argues, “emancipation begins when we have come to understand how the knowledge, values and ideologies that constrain the way we think have come into being. For it is once we have understood the history of our thinking, that we can change it” (p.208).

In addition, professionalization of adult educators also conflicts with the tenets of a learning society. To recall Faris (2003), in a learning society, “the links between non-formal and formal learning are integrated in an approach that recognizes, values and celebrates learning in all forms throughout an individual’s lifespan, and in the life-wide settings of family, community and workplace” (p.2). However, Welton (1995) highlights for us how the modern practice of professionalized adult education has arbitrarily constructed the boundaries of ‘adult education’, thereby vanquishing alternative learning processes and
knowledge forms. He argues that:

Disputes over adult education’s boundaries indicate pointedly that the process of constructing a Discipline is political and normative. Those who succeed in establishing a particular vision of the academic study of adult learning as universal are necessarily determining what counts, or does not count, as objects of study. (p.131)

Likewise, as educators become so invested in the philosophy of meeting the needs of individuals, the needs of society become subordinated (Helterbran, 1999) and the 'social' vanishes from consideration. Consequently, “[t]hese manifestations of adult education serve ‘system world imperatives’ rather than drawing on the lifeworld of the learners” (Newman, 1999, p.212).

Therefore, when examining the history of adult education in Canada, we must not overlook the fact that adults have always been learning. Whether it was learning to make a living or gaining mastery over their life situations, Canadian society has always been a learning system (Welton, 1995). Whereas Canadian men and women have always been engaged in learning, formal adult education in Canada can trace its roots back to the 1800s. Through programs like the Mechanics Institute, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Radio Forum and the Women's Institute, individuals, drawing on scientific ways of understanding the world, began educating individuals for the purpose of creating and sustaining pedagogical social and learning spaces. These early initiatives are indicative of the rich volunteer and citizenship tradition of adult education in Canada. However, in the 1930s the winds of change began to blow and the field started shifting its vision from its social tradition of improving society, to that of
providing services to individuals (Selman, 1998; Selman, Cooke, Selman, & Dampier, 1998). With the formation of the Canadian Association for Adult Educators (CAAE), a sense of professionalism emerges, and by the 1950s considerable advances were made in providing various types of training opportunities for adult educators (Selman, Cooke, Selman, & Dampier, 1998). This trend toward increased professionalization altered the aims of adult education in Canada away from education for social change, to its current state as a “market-place for educational products and potential consumers” (Hake as cited in Welton, 1995, p.130). Although citizenship education and education for social change had been an eminent feature of adult education in Canada, the developments toward the latter half of the twentieth century worked to change this tradition. This shift toward professionalization and specialization has proved to be problematic because as adult educators become further invested in meeting the needs of individuals, the social, cultural and political needs of society fade into the background (Collins, 1995; Selman, 1995). Moreover, it removes adult educators from the lifeworld as educators become more concerned with meeting system world imperatives, rather than drawing on the lifeworld of learners (Newman, 1999). Finally, this trend toward increased professionalization conflicts with the tenets of the learning society by arbitrarily constructing the boundaries of ‘adult education’, and thus vanquishing alternative forms of knowing (Welton, 1995).
Professionalization and Adult Education

By taking a historical perspective we see that professionalization of adult educators is not compatible with the goals of a learning society. In the current context of professionalization and the professional ideology we see the ways in which specialization separates educators from the lifeworld by casting alternative knowledge forms and learning processes outside the boundaries of the field (Welton, 1995). “The commitment to deliberative democracy runs deep in the Canadian tradition, and we remain uneasy to this day with a narrow professional identity as ‘learning experts’” (Welton, 1998, p.45). Similarly, the historical evolution of adult education practices in Canada, with its strong ties to citizenship education and education for social change, conflict with the recent trend toward market-based education and the identification of the individualized learner as object (client) for professionalized practice (Collins, 1995; Welton, 1998). However, as we begin to look forward, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge what adult educators have come to gain through increased professionalization. No one would argue the benefits of specialization in medicine, particularly if they needed the services and skills of a pediatric oncologist, trial lawyer, dentist, or corporate accountant; but how has adult education benefited from increased professionalization? What lessons if any can we draw from professionalization to date?

In terms of adult education, advocates of professionalization cite recognition and credibility as its main advantage. Adult education has historically
existed on the periphery, never being able to establish itself as a high status profession. According to Carr-Saunders (1966), the term profession refers to an ideal type of occupational institution. The inability to achieve this status has resulted in “facilities of education generally find[ing] themselves on the margins of the university community” (Hall & Schultz, 2003, p.380). Furthermore, “[a]dult education thought and practice has [also] been largely invisible to the Canadian historian” (Welton, 1987, p.3). However, with widespread enthusiasm for lifelong learning and a drive toward increased professionalization, educators have had an opportunity to move adult education from its marginal role (Jonas, 1991). This has resulted in significant advances in the literature surrounding adult education as it is generally understood that if a field of practice is going to advance toward professional status, it must have a body of knowledge on which to base its growth and development (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998). By rendering the invisible visible (Welton, 1987), professionalization has aided to some degree, in enhancing prestige, providing greater credibility, increasing recognition for practitioners, and fostering a coherent and common identity (Brocket, 1991; Galbraith & Gilley, 1986; White, 1992). As a result, more academically able people are drawn to the profession, while those already in it are encouraged to remain. Furthermore, professionalization is credited with increasing an educator’s earning potential, and all of these outcomes are beneficial to both practitioners and society as a whole (Galbraith & Gilley, 1986). Improved performance through the advancement of identified
competencies is another perceived benefit of professionalization. Society expects professionals from all disciplines to demonstrate competence in the roles they play and in the tasks that they perform (White, 1992). According to Galbraith & Gilley (1986), identification and improvement of competencies will: (1) provide professionals with a tool for self-assessment and professional growth; (2) provide a common set of concepts and vocabulary that will improve communication among professionals and other professional groups; (3) provide professional preparation programs with information needed for program development; (4) provide an opportunity for a common core of knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by the adult educator; (5) allow the public and the profession to distinguish between those who are qualified and those who are not; and, (6) provide a basis for defining an emerging field of study. Consequently, practitioners not only improve their performance through the advancement of identified competencies but also stay abreast of new developments in their field.

Finally, professionalization provides a means of protecting both adult educators and society at large. The process of professionalization is promoted as a mechanism to protect the public from misconduct and incompetence through the development of competencies and adherence to ethical standards (Tobias, 2003). In addition to protecting the public, professionalization is also touted as a means of ensuring protection from outside intervention in the form of government regulations and/or legislative action (Miller as cited in Galbraith & Gilley, 1986). Proponents of professionalization believe that professionalization
would protect against potential government intervention, as well as protect clients from incompetent and unethical educators (Tobias, 2003).

While both adult educators and society derive benefit from professionalization through enhanced credibility, the expansion of knowledge, attraction and retention of practitioners, the potential for improved performance and protection from incompetence and misconduct, it is important to note that professionalization for any occupation is wrought with complexity. For example, it is recognized that “when teaching is examined through the lens of traditional perceptions of what constitutes a profession, certain critical criteria are missing” (Abdal-Haqq, 1992, p.2). Therefore, according to Carr-Saunders (1966), it is more useful to think of occupations, like adult education, as being on a continuum of professionalization between the ideal-type of profession at one end, and unorganized occupational categories, or non-professions, at the other end.

What makes the issue of professionalization of adult education complex is the fact that there is not one cohesive definition or identity regarding what/who is an adult educator. Edwards (1997) state, “[f]or ‘adult educators’ – and perhaps for all education and training practitioners – who they are, what they stand for, and what they do – becomes complex and ambiguous….what it means to be an ‘adult educator’ is constantly reconfigured” (p.43). These ambiguities stem from a variety of factors including: the largely invisible nature of adult education activities; the fact that most adult educators do not identify themselves as such; the inherent diversity of adult education; and the tensions surrounding its
perceived goals.

Adult education and the practice of teaching are as old as mankind (Candy, 1981). As such, the passing-on of culture, skills, traditions, and language have been going on informally for centuries, through churches and voluntary organizations, which have often rendered such educational endeavours invisible to the public eye. “It is recognized that a great deal of adult education in our society goes on in the voluntary sector – voluntary associations, health associations, hobby and interest clubs, churches – which is largely invisible to the general public view” (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.309). This invisibility coupled with the wide range of individuals who currently engage in adult education practices, both formally and informally, make it difficult to ascertain just who the practitioners are that would/should be professionalized. “When a wide range of practitioners both inside and outside the traditionally defined field of education and training are engaged in working with adults, who then are adult educators?” (Edwards & Usher, 1997, pp.42-43).

This issue of increased professionalization is also further complicated by the fact that the majority of teachers engaged in adult education activities come to the field because of their subject matter or lifeworld or system domain expertise. Consequently, most of them do not view themselves or their careers as being linked to field of adult education (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998). Shah (1998) observes tellingly:

Unlike lawyers, doctors, engineers and social workers, the majority of practitioners of adult education do not have a
homogeneous professional background. No certification or examinations are required to become adult educators. Due to the voluntary nature of programme, adult education as a profession is neither well established nor well understood. (p.3)

The other complexities that both frame and cloud the issue of professionalization relate to its diversity, its overall aim, and how this relates to the professionalization of the field. Because the field assumes a wide diversity of identity by virtue of different subject matters, sponsorship, type of learner, method, purposes and context (Deshler, 1991), there exists profound philosophical and ideological differences within the field. There are those who believe that the aim of adult education is “learning associated with a social purpose” (Lindeman as cited in Briton, 1996, p.5), while others view learning in terms of its contribution to the economy and one’s chance of participating in the labour market (Finger & Asun, 2001). Those in favour of increased professionalization are viewed as “no longer pursing the project of emancipation and social change” (Finger & Asun, 2001, p.124), and are accused of adhering to a technical rational model of professional development. Thus, they are believed to be falling prey to ‘the cult of efficiency’, which according to Collins (as cited in Briton, 1996):

Refers to a growing and seductive, tendency to make more and more areas of human endeavour (the practical, moral and political projects of everyday life) amenable to measurement and techno-bureaucratic control according to what is invoked as a scientific approach. It elevates technical rationality to a position of undisputed pre-eminence over other forms of human thought and discourse. (p.15)

Therefore, the struggle is not only with what the goals of adult education should
be, but also with what the current model of professionalized means to adult education (Alexander, 1991). Deshler (1991) comments:

The debate about further professionalization of the field has its roots on the one hand, in the idea that the best adult education is a 'friend teaching a friend,' and, on the other, in the idea that the best adult education must be assured through professionalization. (p.404)

Consequently, before entering down a path toward increased professionalization, it is important that members of an occupation understand that the issues surrounding professionalization are infinitely more complex than simply weighing gains versus losses. According to Shanahan (1995), the debate over professionalization cannot be resolved unless all sides examine the assumptions underlying their position, and ask: “[i]s professionalization a desirable goal […]? If so, then under which circumstance is professionalization desirable?” (Alexander, 1991, p.127). Moreover, it is paramount that occupations develop a critique of professionalization as it has occurred thus far and examine the ‘trade-offs’.

Although undeniably there are benefits associated with professionalization and lessons to be learned, the sense of uneasiness regarding professionalization of adult educators becomes no less diminished. Consequently, we must take heed of our inner disquiet and ask ourselves whether professionalization of adult educators in a learning society is a desirable goal. It is my contention that when we explore this question we will discover the ways in which adult education in a learning society conflicts with the traditional model of professionalization, and
dislodges us from our rich social tradition of education for social change. It is through this examination that we will come to understand how increased professionalization controls and shapes adult education practices and adult learning activities (Briton, 1996).

Unlike a profession where the client is in a ‘subordinate position’ and thus cannot understand one’s own needs, adult learning activities often take place without an adult educator (Brockett, 1991). In the learning society, learning can take place anywhere, and “the measure of learning lies in what has been learned by the person, rather than in what has been offered by the provider” (Cross, 1991, p.139). What is important to recognize here is that a learning society “transcends and encompasses ‘communities of practice’ and ‘learning organizations’ as well as the education system – all of which are fostered in the wider environment of ‘learning communities’ and thereby mutually reinforce the shared vision of a learning society led by learners” (Faris, 2003, p.2), not by specialists. Consequently, adult education in the learning society is characterized by mutual involvement in the planning process between the adult educator and the adult learners. “Proponents of the learning society stress the importance of involving participants in the diagnosis of learning needs and the subsequent creation of appropriate learning experiences” (Boshier, 1980, p.4). However, such an approach conflicts with a traditional model of professionalization where decision making lies in the hands of the professional expert (Brockett, 1991).
A further area in which adult education is in conflict with the traditional model of professionalization, is in its method of credential/licensing practitioners. While most traditional professions offer credentials to their members through standardized testing of cognitive knowledge, such as in licensing and certification exams, this approach is not useful in assessing the skills needed in working with adult learners (Brockett, 1991). Moreover, those involved in traditional professions are typically only concerned with those aspects of the client that fall within their area of specialization (Brockett, 1991). However, adult educators strive to take a more holistic view of learners and learning. As Lambert (1980) states:

> Adult education is, then, clearly an interdisciplinary medium; by concentrating upon problems rather than information, upon the multi-relational quality of human experience rather than discrete categories of intellectual ‘property’, it asserts in a realistic way the traditional formula of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. (p.171)

Therefore, we can see that pursuing a path of increased professionalization is in conflict with adult education in the learning society.

In addition to being contrary to the aims of adult education, many of the arguments put forth by proponents of professionalization, no longer seem as persuasive when examined under the learning society paradigm. For example, advocates of professionalization often cite recognition and credibility as its main advantage. Adult education has historically existed on the periphery, never being viewed as a real profession. As such, “faculties of education generally find themselves on the margins of the university community” (Hall & Schultz, 2003,
However, with widespread enthusiasm for lifelong learning in recent years, adult education has experienced a meteoric rise to prominence (Candy, 1981). In fact, according to Boshier (1980), “[w]orldwide developments suggest that adult education and adult educators will remain at the cutting-edge of any learning society” (pg.7), leaving arguments for increased professionalization for the purposes of recognition and credibility moot.

Improved performance through the advancement of identified competencies is another reason cited by professionalization advocates. Society expects professionals from all disciplines to demonstrate competence in the roles they play and in the tasks that they perform (White, 1992). While no one would dispute that the learning society requires competent adult educators, the rigid criteria imposed through professionalization for the attainment of those competencies is contrary to the aims of the learning society. Traditional professions have forged close ties to educational institutions as the means by which instruction in the professional competencies are obtained. However, according to Schon (1987):

The schools’ view of professional knowledge is a traditional view of knowledge as privileged information or expertise. They view teaching as transfer of information; learning, as receiving, storing, and digesting information. ‘Knowing that’ tends to take priority over ‘knowing how’; and know-how, when it does make its appearance, takes the form of science-based technique. (p.309)

But, within the learning society, the emphasis shifts away “from an exclusively information centred paradigm of the learning process to include an array of other kinds of learning” (Lambert, 1980, p.172).
Furthermore, by pursuing increased professionalization, learning comes to be viewed solely in economic terms and one’s chance to participate in the labour market (Finger & Asun, 2001), rather than embracing learning for learning’s sake. Moreover, becoming a fully realized learning society means increased options for adult learners (Cross, 1991) and this includes the means through which adult educators acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their role. “Diversity, in turn, implies a widening of learning options for individuals, both as teachers and as students” (Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario, 1972, p.41). The learning society demands flexibility and the co-existence of many ideologies, points of view and ways of knowing.

Those making a career of adult education need by one or various means to acquire as much competence as possible with respect to the roles they are performing. But at the same time the field needs to retain flexibility and imagination with respect to utilizing the special talents and knowledge of any who have something of benefit to offer to other learners. (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.335)

Lastly, proponents of professionalization view it as a means of protecting both adult educators and society at large. The process of professionalization is promoted as a mechanism to protect the public from misconduct and incompetence through the development of competencies and adherence to ethical standards (Tobias, 2003). Collins (1995) comments:

The case for professionalization in adult education is readily understood. It is usually argued from a standpoint that professionalization provides assurance to adult learners (increasingly referred to as ‘clients’) about the competence of those from whom they rely on for pedagogical guidance. (p.77)
However, it can be argued that professionalization of adult education does little more than increase the costs of adult education and protect the economic interests of the educator, rather than protect the learner from incompetent educators (Deshler, 1991). Such an argument also casts the learner in the role of potential victim, rather than acknowledge their role as partner in the learning process, and their ability to make informed judgments about its practice. “As individuals, we are accountable for what we know and how we have come to know it. Effective learners in an emancipatory, participative, democratic society – a learning society – become a community of cultural critics and social activists” (Mezirow, 1995, p.70). In addition, Collins (1995) strongly argues that this “misguided preoccupation with professionalization has diverted adult educators from other forms of organization that could be more empowering for themselves and for their students” (p.78).

Beyond the fact that traditional models of professionalization do not fit with adult education; and that many of the reasons touted for increased professionalization conflict with the learning society paradigm, there are other reasons that increased professionalization of adult education is not in keeping with the learning society ideal. First, the model of learning in the learning society involves the “creation of an integrated system wherein people can opt in and out of education from cradle to grave” (Boshier, 1980, p.7). “It is unthinkable for learning to be considered an enterprise or activity that occurs only during childhood or at other specific points in the life span” (Helterbran, 1999, p.4). To
argue otherwise, is according to Belanger (2003), to be a ‘witch apprentice’ who:

[W]ant[s] to transform education into a merely competitive market, plac[ing] the education of youth and adults competing against each other as two rival expenses, not wanting to recognize the cumulative development of collective intelligence nor the cumulative process of the educational biographies. The first factor of participation in adult education and of an active citizenship is an initial education extended for all. (p.10)

Within a learning society, lifelong learning becomes an organizing principle and social goal. Lifelong learning is voluntary in nature and adults are able to decide what they wish to learn and when. However, one of the inevitable consequences of professionalization will be a tendency for educators to promote more and more circumstances in which adults will be required to use their services. “An obsession with technique combined with the drive to professionalize, leads adult educators to endorse mandatory continuing education” (Collins, 1995, p.79). Whether this will be in the form of mandatory continuing education in various professions, mandatory training programs as dictated by the courts, or artificially high formal education requirements for workers (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998), the voluntary nature of education is eroded. Consequently, “[l]ifelong learning thus becomes lifelong training or lifelong schooling in line with technicist ideology” (Jonas, 1991, p.7).

The learning society ideal is not concerned with how much people learn, but whether they continue to learn and how they contribute that learning to society (Cross, 1991). In the learning society:

The idea of education received as result of school attendance is replaced by a more dynamic concept stressing acquisition of
knowledge, attitudes and skills through experience, mutual instruction, and a lifetime of involvement in a broad array of formal and informal learning experiences. (Boshier, 1980, p.4)

In addition to threatening the voluntary nature of education, professionalization assumes a certain level of competence that once achieved, may lead to the assumption that further learning on behalf of practitioners is no longer required (Hyland, 1994). Professionalization runs the risk of educators becoming static. As deemed ‘experts’ they may become unwilling to adapt to the fluidity of the learning society. Within the learning society it is imperative that teachers, at all stages of their careers “reinterpret their own professional roles if the objectives of lifelong education are to become a reality in the lives of most men and women” (Renwick, 1980, p.160). Furthermore, these experts of modern adult education practice, despite their aspirations for professionalization, “become increasingly de-skilled as they surrender their agency as teacher for the less pro-active role as broker of commodified educational services” (Collins, 1995, p.83). As such, educators in the learning society need to not only make choices about whose interests they should serve, but also constantly raise questions about “what competencies ought to be acquired, through what methods, and in what domains of practice” (Schon, 1987, p.15).

Perhaps the most compelling argument against increased professionalization, is its obsession with methodology and technique (Briton, 1996) amendable to measurement and techno-bureaucratic control, thus elevating “technical rationality to a position of undisputed pre-eminence over
other forms of human thought and discourse” (Jonas, 1991, p.2). Collins (1995) identifies several consequences of this obsession:

Much of the literature which critiques professionalization tendencies in adult education stem from a concern about the cult of efficiency (technical rationality) embodied in system discourse. This reveals how eagerness to serve the conventional professions, through the provision of continuing professional education, shapes modern adult education practices. (p.79)

Our uncritical acceptance of expertise and efficiency not only infantilizes adults by creating excessive dependence on professionals (Briton, 1996), but also leads to an erosion of autonomy in our everyday lives (Jonas, 1991). This is contrary to the ideals of a learning society in which learning “is no one’s jurisdiction and is therefore everyone’s responsibility in a knowledge-based economy and society” (Faris, 2003, p.6).

Moreover, “[n]otions of teaching as an art are being supplanted by technical craft-based definitions. Discourse about social and moral purpose are being edged out by discourses about advanced skills” (Hall & Schultz, 2003, p.380). By reducing professional knowledge and skill to simplistic competency statements, the theory and practice of adult education runs the risk of becoming “proletariatized and de-skilled” (Chown & Last as cited in Hyland, 1994).

Adult learning situations managed by technical formulations, such as standardized pre-packaged curricula and preconceived needs assessment instruments put together by those who have contrived to become designated as experts tend towards artificiality and detachment from real life everyday experiences. (Jonas, 1991, pp.4-5)

Consequently, “these manifestations of adult education serve ‘system world

It is also important to recognize that “professionalized services communicate a world view that defines our lives and our societies as a series of technical problems” (McKnight, 1977, p.90). This supposition is supported by Schon (1987) who argues:

Technical rationality holds that practitioners are instrumental problem solvers who select technical means best suited to particular purposes. Rigorous professional practitioners solve well-formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge…But, as we have come to see with increasing clarity over the last twenty or so years, the problems of real-world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures. (pp.3-4)

Conversely, what we find in the learning society is that education is “not ‘rationally’ designed with specific objectives and measurable outcomes but [is] often temporary, sometimes haphazard, and often transitory” (Schied, as cited in Briton, 1996, p.17). As such, in the learning society, “education will not have any fixed points of entry and ‘cut-off’ exits. It will become a more continuous process within formal education and in its role within other functions of life” (Ranson, as cited in Smith, 2000, p.3). In a learning society we need to look beyond formal educational environments and professional practitioners, and locate learning as a quality not just of individuals but also as an element of systems (Smith, 2000).

It is important to recognize that adult education practices within the learning society are diverse. In the learning society, adult education is not simply
post-tertiary, but rather is part of everyday living. “All types of learning needs to be recognized and made visible, according to their content, quality and outcomes rather than their location and form” (Madhukar, 2004, p.13). This raises the question as to whether it is sensible to continue to think of adult education as a single field (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998). Edwards & Usher (1997) state, “[f]or ‘adult educators’ – and perhaps for all education and training practitioners – who they are, what they stand for, and what they do – becomes complex and ambiguous….what it means to be an ‘adult educator’ is constantly reconfigured” (p.43). Thus, it becomes problematic to implement a licensing and credentialing process, to such a diversity of practice. “One of the main tenets of the learning society is the involvement of the entire community. That means businesses, employers, educators, community workers, health workers, schools, private training organizations, craft groups, cultural groups – the list is endless – it means everyone” (Madhukar, 2004, p.9). Consequently, in a field that is already characterized by diversity, professionalization would only serve to “increase the gap between the teacher and the learner, thereby reducing the quality of the learning experience rather than increasing it” (Deshler, 1991, p.404).

According to Collins (1992), “[p]rofessionalization is primarily about exercising exclusive autonomy over designated areas of practical knowledge” (p.38). This directly contradicts the ideals of the learning society. According to Schuller, Schuetze, & Istance (2002), “no one would reject the idea that people
learn outside the education system as well as within it, but in practice it is learning within the system that is given all the attention” (p.10). However, in the learning society, educational institutions no longer have a monopoly on education but will be linked with informal systems to provide opportunities for continuous learning. In a learning society, adult educators are not experts with exclusive rights to professional knowledge, but rather are collaborators who work to engage participants in the identification of their learning needs and the creation of appropriate learning experiences. Contrary to being experts with sanctioned authority, educators in the learning society are co-learners employing a diverse mosaic of methods, techniques and devices with the goal of developing self-directed, lifelong learners (Boshier, 1980). Moreover, within a learning society, learning is viewed as:

[A] natural process, where everyone is potentially learning and teaching….This represents an irreversible transformation of traditional educational and training relationships, in which the ‘programme’ determined the route through education, in which there was imbalance of power and relationship with truth in the ‘master/pupil’ relationship, and in which the division into disciplines skewed any approach to dealing with the problems we confront in our professional and personal lives. (Caspar, 2002, pp.111-112)

Therefore, educators engaged in adult learning activities, must align their “pedagogical commitments and curriculum more relevantly with the struggles of ordinary men and women for whom the privileges of professionalized status are beyond reach” (Collins, 1992, p.42). By avoiding the trappings of professionalization, we move closer to realizing the learning society ideal; one in
which society mobilizes “their learning resources, lifelong and lifewide, in the service of the good society” (Welton, 2005, p.214). While undeniably there are perceived benefits associated with professionalization, including, enhanced reputation, recognition, the ability to attract more academically able people to the field, and improved performance through the identification of core competencies; when we examine professionalization in the context of the learning society, we discover the ways in which the traditional model of professionalization conflicts with adult education, how it dislodges us from our rich social tradition of education for social change, and their ways in which it controls and shapes adult education practices (Brton, 1996). Consequently, pursuing a path of increased professionalization in adult education is not only problematic in terms of its relationship to traditional models of professionalization, but also directly conflicts with the ideals of the learning society and the social nature of adult education in Canada.

**Re-conceptualizing the Role of the Adult Educator**

In recent years, the focus has increasingly shifted from adult and lifelong ‘education’ to adult and lifelong ‘learning’. Welton (2005) states:

> [I]t is not until the twentieth century, which we could characterize as a time when the negative consequences of the industrial learning society become more manifest, more an integral part of the consciousness of men and women, that we actually see the conscious articulation of a philosophy of lifelong learning and the learning society. (p.23)

This change is “an enormously important transformation in the conceptualization of society’s resources for the promotion of adult learning” (Selman, Cooke,
Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.419). Moreover, it “implies a new way of organizing the social production of knowledge, work, and power, with the concept of empowerment as a key category” (Madhukar, 2004, p.161). Furthermore, this paradigm shift also has significant implications when we think about professionalization and the role of the adult educator in the learning society. Jonas (1991) explains:

When adult educators allow themselves a preoccupation with the professionalization of their own endeavours, they become very much part of the problem and abandon any real prospect of achieving an emancipatory, critical practice of adult education. (p.16)

In a learning society where everyone is teaching and learning, the question then becomes, what is the role of an adult educator when they no longer have a monopoly on teaching and learning? And, does it make sense to continue to think of adult education as a single field of practice?

**Multiple Identities**

When we re-conceptualize the role of the adult educator in the learning society, we must accept that adult educators cannot be bound by a single identity. While professionalization is associated with a drive to consolidate more substantial recognition for the role of adult educator, and to incorporate within its field of practice, an increasing array of pedagogical techniques (Collins, 1992), it must be understood that the identities of adult educators in a learning society are described and constructed in a multiplicity of ways. Because the social, political, economic and institutional context in which adults learn has changed and
continues to change, so too does the diversity of roles held by adult educators (Edwards, 1997). Edwards observes:

The terrain of life-long learning is characterized by diversity, with the result that there is a sense of uncertainty about what constitutes ‘adult education’ and what it means to be an ‘adult educator’. Rather than a single bounded identity, it is suggested that workers with adults are increasingly having to adopt multiple identities and be part of many narratives as a way of negotiating the complexity of their working lives. (p.168)

Within a learning society, the context in which learning occurs takes on an even greater significance. Not only do we see learning situated in a particular context, but we can also see the ways in which gender, race, class, oppression, and the conceptions of knowledge and truth, shape the contexts in the first place, and the subsequent learning that occurs (Merriam, 2001). Therefore, because learning is a function of the socio-political-economic environment of the individual, and the adult learner is viewed holistically, the individual’s learning needs cannot be isolated from the circumstances that produce those needs (Cervero, 1992). As a result, educators must be responsive to these needs by embracing a range of identities. “Multiple meanings can be and are read into the many constructions of the identities of workers with adults” (Edwards, 1997, p.149).

Because what it means to be an adult educator in a learning society cannot be neatly packaged; structured, predictable and standardized working practices are being undermined, and with that, the rationale for technical rationality as a way of structuring and organizing knowledge (Briton, 1996, Collins, 1992, & Edwards, 1997). Educators today require:
[A] practical, contextualized form of rationality in which scientific knowledge is a resource to be utilized rather than applied on a simple means/ends basis in addressing the situations of others. The question for the practitioner is not ‘what rules should I apply?’ but ‘how I ought to act in this particular situation?’. (Usher & Bryant, as cited in Edwards, 1997, p.150)

As a result, educators find themselves in an era were flexibility and multi-skilling are the order of the day. Consequently, educators must determine how they can contribute in ways that are not only responsive, but also consistent with their unique abilities, interests and aspirations (Brockett, 1991). In a learning society, “workers in this terrain need to be able to construct themselves not as a uniform community, but as a community of differences, inclusive rather than exclusive” (Edwards, 1997, p.170). By being inclusive and recognizing and validating a multitude of identities, educators are able to rid themselves of the shackles of a bounded identity, and thereby bring to the foreground those aspects of identity which have traditionally been marginalized and silenced (Edwards, 1997).

Giroux (as cited in Edwards, 1997) argues that:

[E]ducators need to reposition themselves as cultural workers with an identity of ‘border-crossers’ engaging in border pedagogy. This points to the need to ‘understand otherness in its own terms, and to further create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power’. It is the possibilities of creating and occupying these borderlands or ‘in-between’ spaces and ‘speaking from the margins’ which open up different possibilities for identity and practice. (pp.171-172)

Therefore, in order to achieve the ideals of the learning society adult educators must adopt multiple identities and accept that many meanings will be read into the construction of these identities (Edwards, 1997). However, beyond
acknowledging the importance of diversity, there are several key facets within their role that I propose are crucial in order to achieve the learning society ideal. These include fostering self-directed learning, being agents of change, acknowledging their role as political actors, mediating between specialized knowledge and the lifeworld, and facilitating across multiple learning domains. Only when adult educators embrace their multiple identities and take responsibility for their role as practitioner and the goals of the learning society, will a professionalized model of adult education be replaced by a sense of vocation, consistent with the ideals of a just learning society.

**Fostering Self Directed Learning**

According to Helterbran (1999), a learning society can only become a reality when the vast majority of individuals and organizations that comprise that society engage in learning. “A learning society is one in which learners adopt a learning approach to life” (Edwards, 1997, p.184), and a learning society is realized “only when there exists a pool of lifelong learners in sufficient quantity to create, sustain, and pave the way for subsequent generations to do the same” (Helterbran, 1999, p.107). As a result, educators must play a significant role in preparing students to be self-directed learners. “Self-direction in learning refers to both the external characteristics of an instructional process and the internal characteristics of the learner, where the individual assumes primary responsibility for a learning experience” (Brockett & Hiemstra, as cited in Chovanec, 1998, p.303). By providing learning environments that foster autonomy, educators of
adults can further promote the aims of the learning society.

Teachers, too, must play a significant role in preparing students to be fully capable of independent learning. Utilizing the most appropriate practices stimulate and reinforce attitudes and skills necessary for individuals to be lifelong learners. (Nyiri, as cited in Helterbran, 1999, p.30)

**Agents of Change**

In addition to fostering self-directed learning, adult educators in a learning society need to embrace their roles as agents of change. Today’s society can be characterized by change, and the speed to which individuals must constantly react and respond to it, is one of the greatest learning challenges of the twenty-first century. Our educational systems can no longer be expected to train a labour force for stable industrial jobs, but rather “must instead train individuals to be innovative, capable of evolving [evolutive skills], adapting to a rapidly changing world and assimilating change” (The Delors Commission, as cited in Welton, 2001, p.2). Madhukar (2004) states:

The Learning Society Concept is a response to the challenges posed by twenty-first century changes. It provides a more cohesive and connected pathway, designed for the benefit of the learner by: providing opportunities and how to access them; providing co-ordination between the Learning Cities have developed learning as a key tool in preparing their citizens for a new area, which enables citizens to: know and understand changes, acquire and improve the skills to adapt successfully to changes, shape and influence changes so that they can be agents of the future not victims of it. (p.9)

So rather than offering an array of prescribed pedagogical techniques to deal with a series of economic and social problems, purveyors of adult education in a learning society become empowered to be “active, creative, risk-taking workers –
change agents – with certain degrees of autonomy in how they define and achieve their work goals" (Edwards, 1997, p.165).

**Political Actors**

Beyond being multi-skilled agents of change, educators of adults in a learning society must also relinquish their claim to neutrality and work to create ‘alternative discourses’ “which enable the oppressed (the poor, the unemployed, the marginalized) to give voice to their legitimate concerns and counteract oppressive ideologies” (Haughey, 1998, p.211). It is important to recognize that adult educators are not value-free possessors of a technical process, but rather are political actors within a social structure. Education programs always have outcomes and these outcomes either maintain the current structure or change it (Cervero, 1992). Consequently, it is only when adult educators open space for a critique of civil society, do they ensure that the learning taking place is drawing on the lifeworld of the learners, rather than serving ‘system world imperatives’ (Newman, 1999). Accordingly, adult educators in the learning society can play an important role in identifying and facilitating strategies whereby adults can further resist the inappropriate encroachment of professionalization into their everyday lives and roll back its most repressive effects (Jonas, 1991). Collins (1998) counsels us, that: “an understanding of the connection between relationships of power and the distribution of knowledge is seen as crucial for the planning of strategies toward political and social equality and, hence, for a critical practice of adult education” (p.56).
When we think about some of the challenges related to living in an information age, ironically what we often hear is that we are exposed to too much information! We have become a society that is always ‘plugged-in’, and thus always receiving information, whether it’s via the internet, television, blackberry, cell phone, or giant electronic billboards, we are constantly bombarded around the clock with new information. As such, adult educators can play a role in helping individuals filter the vast quantities of information that they are exposed to everyday. When a society and its citizens operate in a culture of information overload, how do we make sense of this information? How do we decide what to absorb and assimilate versus what we discard and deem unimportant? How do we go back and resource the information and knowledge that we were not ready for then but are ready for now? What factors or conditions influence the filters we use as individuals, organizations and associations to process the enormous amount of information we are exposed to everyday? How can we best modify these filters in order to maximize our learning needs? Adult educators in the learning society can play an integral role in mediating between specialized knowledge and the lifeworld, in its various forms. Moreover, adult educators must foster critical thinking skills amongst individuals, organizations and society as a whole, so that they are better equipped to prioritize, process and integrate new information that is essential for their ongoing learning and development. In this sense the new adult educators would practice what Brookfield (1990) terms...
critically responsive teaching, teaching that aims to nurture a “critically alert, questioning cast of mind. This cast of mind entails a readiness to scrutinize claims of universal truth with skepticism, to reject monicausal explanations of complex issues, and to mistrust final solutions to intractable problems” (p.24).

Such an approach calls for an alternative definition of professionalization, one that is more consistent with critical education, “whereby adult educators learn to understand how adults learn, how to help them learn, and how to learn with them” (Mezirow, 1995, p.217).

In addition to mediating between specialized knowledge and the lifeworld, adult educators in the learning society must also mediate between different types of learning. Because learning is part of the fabric that makes up such a society, it is beyond what happens in the classroom, but encompasses the very nature of human interaction. Such learning is often termed informal or tacit learning. The term informal learning was first introduced by Malcolm Knowles in 1950, and refers to a process of learning that takes place in everyday experiences (Coffer, 2005). Individuals can engage in informal learning any time, any where and with any one. “Informal learning can take place in any space, such as the workplace, the family, a religious institution, the community and the like; like formal and non-formal learning, informal learning can occur at any age, from birth to death” (Schurgurensky, 2000, p.6). Because informal learning is a normal, everyday human activity, its significance is often overlooked and largely ignored. Alan Tough (2002) notes that:
Informal learning just seems to be a very normal, very natural human activity. But it is so invisible, people just don’t seem to be aware of their own learning. They’re not aware of other people’s learning, educators don’t take it into account and so on. People are spending 15 hours a week at it on average, and yet it’s not talked about, it’s not recognized, it’s sort of ignored or invisible. (Tough, 2002, p.1)

Because individuals, educators and society as a whole are oblivious to informal learning, and the extent to which individuals engage in it, this often “makes it impossible for us to distinguish informal learning activities in any discrete way” (Livingstone, 1998, p.2). As a result, “we do not yet understand how to support this kind of learning without making it artificial or destroying it with too many rules and regulations” (Marsick, Watkins, Callahan & Volpe, 2006, p.799).

Our inability as individuals, educators, and as a broader society, to recognize that we regularly engage in informal learning, and how this lack of understanding inhibits our support of it, represents a significant challenge for achieving the ideals of the learning society. Because informal learning is directly related to our lived experiences (Garrick, 1998), self recognition and the ability to identify informal learning on its own terms, is key. However, at the same time, it presents itself as an opportunity for educators of adults in a learning society. An opportunity to help adults recognize the amount of informal learning they are engaged in and begin to make connections between other learning activities. The subsequent recognition of such learning puts citizens in a better position to articulate what kind of learning programs should be developed and offered, resulting in a model for program development that is predicated on competency
and self identified need, rather than a prescriptive, authoritative model. Boshier (1980) reminds us of the importance of involving learners in the diagnosis of their learning needs and the creation of appropriate learning experiences. Livingstone (1998) affirms:

If you look at the development of new education programs from the vantage point of the actual informal learning accomplishments of working people you may come up with a different set of answers than if you looked at it from the vantage point of a government bureaucrat who is working from the perspective of established education and training programs. (p.8)

Additionally, when adult educators help individuals and organization recognize the amount of informal learning that they are engaged in, it also opens the door for dialogue about what barriers exist that are inhibiting learning, how their learning can be applied, who is benefiting from the learning, how others can benefit and what this tells us about learning in particular contexts.

Furthermore, by recognizing and valuing the extent to which individuals are involved in learning, adult educators can help people appreciate their own learning capacities and those of others, and thus support the ideals of the learning society. In Livingstone’s (2000) words:

The collective recognition of this informal learning and its occurrences across the life course can lead to people more fully valuing both their own learning capacities and those of other social groups. By recognizing the amount of informal learning they are doing, ordinary people can begin to identify connections among the learning activities in which they are involved with their workmates, families and community members. (p.17)

In addition, this recognition results in the acknowledgement that “knowledge is no
longer the special province of formal institutions" (Garrick, 1998, p.52), and this holds particular significance for those who have been traditional marginalized by formal education i.e., working class, aboriginals, older Canadians, etc.

Within the realm of formal education there exists a variety of barriers that prohibit those who have been traditionally marginalized within our society from attending. For example, the sheer financial cost associated with post-secondary education results in the exclusion of members of the working class, and older adults living on a fixed income. Moreover, Euro-centred course curriculums leave aboriginals and minority populations feeling disconnected from the institution and the content delivered. However, participation in informal learning activities is not predicated upon age, gender, race, ethnicity, or class, because all individuals, regardless of their level of education or employment status actively engage in some form of informal learning. As Livingstone (2000) highlights:

Anyone can engage in informal learning on his or her own volition and schedule, and apparently people in the most socially disadvantaged statuses are just as likely to do so as those in the most socially dominant positions. The submerged informal part of the iceberg of detectable adult learning does not have the same hierarchical structure as the pyramid of organized education. (pp.21-22)

Therefore, within the learning society, adult educators can create spaces for those marginalized members to ensure that their learning is integrated into all aspects of society. When society achieves a majority of lifelong learners it becomes a learning society. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless individuals, organizations and society open learning spaces for all of its members and
renders visible the amount of learning that is actually taking place. By validating, celebrating and acknowledging the extent to which individuals are learning, adult educators can foster inclusive lifelong learning, maximize this learning for the benefit of civil society, and transform their practice and reconstruct their work in a collective teaching-learning experience. Rather than perpetuating an exclusionary claim to expert knowledge through a drive toward increased professionalization, adult educators can become champions of the learning society ideal.

**Facilitators Across Multiple Learning Domains**

When we close our eyes and envision the true learning society, one in which learning is no one's jurisdiction and therefore everyone's responsibility, the image of a new kind of adult educator emerges. While the new adult educator embodies all of the characteristics and responsibilities listed, their mandate becomes broader than the individual, the organization or the association with which they engage, and encompasses whole communities. The new adult educator is one who bridges the learning that happens in workplaces, organizations, and public spheres and ensures it is integrated into all aspects of our lives. Within organizations and social movements, adult educators can work to enhance their understanding of the learning dynamics which operate within these domains. But beyond this, the new adult educator must bridge the learning between and amongst organizations, workplaces, and public spheres so that there is a system of cross pollinated learning. In this sense, adult educators
must engage in what I have termed *poligogy*, the facilitation of learning across multiple learning domains. Adult educators must become the conduit that ensures that learning does not happen in siloed isolation within each of these domains, but rather is shared so that it is assimilated throughout whole communities. It is only when there is a free flow of learning and knowledge amongst all learning domains, that it can be leveraged for the good of all society. It is when whole people in whole communities are working and learning for the common good, that the ideals of the learning society are realized (Faris, 2003).

**Adult Education as Vocation**

Consequently, when we think of adult education in the learning society, the role of the adult educator transforms from a professionalized model where learning needs are viewed as deficiencies, into a human rights model emphasizing the individuals ‘right to know’ (Brockett, 1991). Such a paradigm shift results in a new type of educator, one who takes personal responsibility for his/her role as practitioner and the goals of the learning society. Rather than focusing on careerism and personal advancement, the adult educator in the learning society recognizes the moral dimension of their practice and is committed to careful reflection on the nature of their practice. In this sense, the professionalized focus on technicist prescriptions and preconceived formulations becomes replaced by a sense of vocation. Collins (1991) captures its essence:

> Vocation refers to a calling and entails firm commitment to the performance of worthwhile activities that are not merely calculated to advance personal career aspirations or fulfill minimum job expectations. It incorporates a strong ethical
dimension, emphasizing an unavoidable necessity to make
judgements about what should or should not be done and a
readiness to take sides on significant issues. (p.42)

Therefore, what we see in the new adult educator is a focus on professionalism
rather than professionalization.

  Professionalism, then, can be distinguished from
  professionalization. When professionalism describes a
  combination of serious commitment to the task at hand,
  competence, and a measure of self-directedness unencumbered
  with a high concern for exclusive self-interests, it is very much in
  line with the practice of vocation. (Collins, 1991, p.87)

  Earlier the question was asked regarding what the role of the adult
educator is in a learning society where everyone is engaged in teaching and
learning. When we envision the role of the adult educator in the learning society,
the professionalized model where learning needs are viewed as deficiencies
transforms into a human rights model founded on the individual’s ‘right to know’
(Brockett, 1991). Vocation replaces technicist prescriptions and ‘professionalism’
becomes the new order of the day. Professional adult educators in the learning
society are not concerned with self interest, but rather are focused on responding
to the learning needs of individuals, organizations and civil society. Professional
adult educators foster self-directed learning and critical thinking skills amongst
individuals, organizations and society as a whole. Professional adult educators
help adults recognize the amount of informal learning they are engaged in so that
they may begin to make connections between other learning activities. In this
regard, adult educators in the learning society are mediators and facilitators who
bridge the learning that happens in workplaces, organizations and public spheres
and make sure that it is integrated into all aspects of our lives. They are the conduit across all learning domains to ensure that whole people in whole communities are working and learning for the common good, and thus ensuring that the ideals of the learning society are realized (Faris, 2003). Mezirow (1995) sums this up when he said, “[f]or me, facilitating learning means precipitating and fostering critical reflection, discourse, and reflective action – an extremely demanding and sophisticated professional role and the defining role of an adult educator (pp.217-218).

**Conclusion**

A learning society can be characterized as one that: (1) harnesses in an integrated, coherent manner the learning resources of every sector of society rather than relying solely on those of the traditional educational sector; (2) promotes social inclusion so that all citizens are empowered so they can contribute to their communities; and (3) recognizes and mobilizes local human and social capital as the critical intangible assets of the new economy and society (Faris, 2003). Adult education and the role of the adult educator are integral to achieving the learning society ideal. In the learning society, adult education is not simply post-tertiary, but rather is part of everyday living. Whereas adult education and the practice of teaching are as old as mankind, “the practice of teaching purely as the preserve of the trained professional is a comparatively recent phenomenon” (Candy, 1981, p.13). Before the emergence of the adult education movement in the latter part of the twentieth century, there
were a large number of individuals who performed the functions of adult educators, even if they did not identify themselves as such. In fact, “[t]he terms ‘adult education’ and ‘adult educator’ in their generic sense are generally seen to have been a product of the period between the two World Wars” (Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p.296).

Professionalization, is defined as “the social and political project or mission designed to enhance the interests of an occupational group” (Goodson and Hargreaves as cited in Hall & Schulz, 2003, p.369). Thus professionalization has become synonymous with status, wealth and power. However, the issue of increased professionalization of adult education is wrought with complexity. Simply stated, the wide range of individuals who currently engage in adult education practices, both formally and informally, make it difficult to ascertain just who the practitioners are that would/should be professionalized. “When a wide range of practitioners both inside and outside the traditionally defined field of education and training are engaged in working with adults, who then are adult educators?” (Edwards & Usher, 1997, pp.42-43). According to Carr-Saunders & Wilson (1966), it is more useful to think of occupations, like adult education, as being on a continuum of professionalization between the ideal-type of profession at one end, and unorganized occupational categories, or non-professions, at the other end. Although it is recognized that “when teaching is examined through the lens of traditional perceptions of what constitutes a profession, certain critical criteria are missing” (Abdal-Haqq, 1992, p.2), the question remains - how far
should the field strive toward becoming the ‘ideal type of profession’ in a learning society?

When we step back and examine professionalization from a historical perspective we see the ways in which it conflicts with the principles of a learning society. Rather than fostering inclusion of all citizens and all forms of knowledge, professionalization is characterized by exclusionary claim to scientific knowledge and the perpetuation of an elitist social order, one based on human capital and specialized expertise (Perkin, 1989). “A profession, like a priesthood, holds power by concession from an elite whose interests it props up” (Illich, 1977, p.17). Furthermore, professionalization is predicated on the expert/client relationship, whereas the learning society fosters the promotion of lifelong learning, which is independent and self-directed. Langford (2003) believes that:

After all, lifelong learners learn foremost for themselves. They believe in continuous personal mastery, demonstrating an independent spirit but able to value the power of interdependent engagement…They view knowledge creation as vital and are active in designing activities that connect their new ideas to the learning community. (pp.19-20)

Moreover, when taking a historical perspective we see that the rise of professionalism and the professional ideology has a long and complex history, with its roots dating back as far back as the Middle Ages. During this period, professions were closely bound to a stratification system and inherently tied to status, wealth and power. The power differential created by professionalization runs contrary to the goals of emancipatory participation of all citizens in a democratic learning society. Inherent in emancipatory participation is equality
and the ability to overcome exploitative, unequal or oppressive social relations (Welton, 2005). Such emancipatory ideals of the learning society can never be realized if educators are removed from the lifeworld of its citizens.

In keeping with a historical perspective, we can also see the ways in which professionalization conflicts with the rich historical social tradition of adult education in Canada. By examining the work of Alfred Fitzpatrick, Father Moses Coady, Father Jimmy Tompkins and Adelaide Hoodless, we see the ways in which ordinary Canadian men and women, engaged in mutual instruction, worked to open learning spaces in order to empower people, increase individual choices and improve the quality of life of individuals and their communities (Draper, 1998; Selman 1998; Welton, 1998). These grass roots educational initiatives embody the principles of the learning society, namely that learning is a partnership between all members of society, its organizations and institutions, and that everyone accepts some responsibility for the learning of others (Madhukar, 2004).

As we turn our gaze forward, we see that professionalization separates educators from their lifeworld by casting alternative ways of knowing outside the boundaries of the field (Welton, 1995). The learning society is predicated on flexibility and the co-existence of many points of view and ways of knowing. However, such diversity runs contrary to professionalization which embraces exclusive scientific expertise, rigidly defined criteria upon which competency is based, and views learning solely in economic terms (Brockett, 1991; Finger &
Asun, 2001; White, 1992). In Collins (1998) words:

This critique tends to illuminate the ways modern adult education practice, steered by technical rationality, is narrowly preoccupied with methodology – takes a corporate agenda (human resources development) and plays a role in reproducing patriarchal, repressive structures of a global society. (p.53)

Moreover, in order to achieve a learning society’s ideals, learning must be voluntary and citizens must have the power to choose what they want to learn and when they want to learn it. Professionalization, however, is a consumer-based affiliation which reduces learners to clients and learning to a commodity for consumption. Such a relationship erodes the voluntary nature of education and opens the door for educators to create dependency and promote more and more circumstances in which adults will require their services (Collins, 1995).

According to McMurtry (1999), once we are able to see and understand that professionalization is a social construct, whose designations as good and exclusions as bad are not laws of nature or even of economic organization, then we are better able to recognize and respond to its effects.

Given that we are living in a learning society, does the role of adult educator become obsolete? While some may argue that their role has become redundant, it is my contention that rather than pursuing a path toward increased professionalization, educators must re-conceptualize their role in order to achieve the professionalism that so many aspire too.

Adult education has a role to help people learn in order to reaffirm values of cooperation and community, in order to organize themselves on the basis of trust and mutual interest, and in order to resist the colonization of their lifeworld by the
system. Adult educators have a role to help develop both the
gentler side of civil society constructed on trust and the harder
side constructed in action and ‘a war of position’. (Allman &
Wallis, as cited in Newman, 1999, p.155)

To coin a phrase of Welton’s (2001), educators need to ‘dream close to the
ground’ by being responsive to the needs of learners and society, by embracing
their roles as agents of change, by fostering inclusivity, and by opening spaces
for autonomous learning. Adult educators must become champions of the
learning society and aid its members in recognizing, validating and celebrating
the breadth and depth of learning that is continually taking place. “When we
conceptualize all of society as a vast school, we clear the way for the entry of the
critical adult educator into the current social dialogue about the future of our
society” (Collins, 1995, p.219).

Recent literature and discourse on the issue of professionalization of adult
educators assumes that professionalism can be assessed by a ‘checklist’ of skills
and knowledge. According to Quigley (2006), there are essentially three
components of the professionalism construct: (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (c)
values, and the standard formula for attaining professional status is
Standardization + Certification + Accountability = Professionalism. However, as
Quigley (2006), aptly points out, all of the discourse surrounding the
professionalization of adult educators begins with a deficit assumption about
what educators need in order to be deemed professionals, rather than “with
consideration of individual and collective practice, belief, skills, and knowledge”
(p.337). Schon (as cited in Quigley, 2006) “found that the world’s top
professionals were not necessarily those with the most prestigious certificates, but that the best-of-the-best had truly mastered ways to learn from all aspects of practice” (pp.343-344). Consequently, rather than waiting to become a ‘recognized profession’ by external criteria, educators should commit to careful reflection on the nature of their practice, and “advocate for professionalism enhancement on the basis of the strengths [they] have brought to Canadian society” (Quigley, p.340). When adult educators take personal responsibility for their role as practitioner, they begin to recognize the moral dimensions of their practice and thus the professionalized focus on technical practice becomes replaced by a sense of vocation (Collins, 1991). By taking pride in who they are, what they do, and where they have come from, educators will forge a stronger sense of professional identity (Quigley, 2006), and their agency in the learning society will no longer be in question.
References


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