

References to the Field of Adult Education and Learning

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Documents and links are suggested here because they are seminal in some way to the field of adult, organizational or social learning; and/or because they have good potential for useful extrapolation to IDRC CD-related policy questions, programme purposes and project objectives.

Rather than identifying a “core” reference set, or building a long reference list -- neither of which would adequately reflect the scope of the “field”, or be flexible enough to be relevant to the diverse aspects of adult education, institutional learning and social change with which IDRC projects are involved -- the intent here has been to provide various “windows” into the literature in ways which will allow Centre staff and partners themselves to explore what seems useful.

As the references below attest, the range of issues discussed in the literature of adult education/learning is wide, diverse in terms of perspectives, concepts, typologies and paradigms. And the field continues to evolve, especially as it becomes clear the extent to which learning underlies most development, change and stability priorities of individuals, institutions and societies. In general, and with considerable overlap, leakage and integration between them, the literature divides into two broad categories: theoretical – why and how learning happens in/by adults; and applied – how adult learning is/can best be encouraged and facilitated.

The three documents prepared for the CD evaluation exercise, including the adult learning concept paper, tried to focus on principles, theories and concepts as they related to IDRC practice. Inevitably, they also reflected the biases of the authors toward certain perspectives and typologies. Because the “field” is obviously much wider than these documents portray, the listings below attempt to be reasonably varied and the suggestion is that, at least in initial conceptualization, as comprehensive as possible an approach be taken in using them to inform where and how the Centre should focus its CD policy and action considerations.

To be effective in a working context, the search for practical, usable ideas from this field must be as open-ended as possible - looking not for *the* answers, but exploring the range of ways into the issues of adult learning which make most sense in terms of the Centre’s own planning and assessment with respect to:

- Capacities of individuals involved in training or informal learning activities;
- The *quality, relevance and appropriateness* of those training programmes / activities themselves;
- The *reach and viability* of IDRC’s funding for capacity in general, and the issue of capacity for *what*;
- Capacity/learning as a development sector in itself (or as related to education itself, to “learning society” issues, or to other research areas such as agriculture or management).

The following series of questions recommended by E. J. Burge, a professor of adult education at UNB, is an example of the kind of challenging, seeking and testing stance that is critical to determining relevant and appropriate directions, actions and effectiveness of learning interventions – in this case, with respect to the new information/learning technologies:

“Whose needs are actually being met if an organization uses (the new) media exclusively? Which multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks are out there to help me think about learning environments in more sophisticated and creative ways? If I used (particular learning) theories, for example, how far might they help me examine assumptions about workplace relationships? How might I be using any learning technology to block or diminish a learner's identity, self-competence, and self-esteem? How might I best maintain strategic balances between old and new, tried and true learning technologies in the face of intense sales talk ... and administrative demands for using only the latest technology for teaching? If any (learning) technology has the potential for either amplifying current practice or transforming it, what are the criteria for a qualitative transformation? And who might best help me critique and assess the amplifying processes?”

A. *References related to inducing change in research policy and practice, the following are set within a learning perspective. In some cases, these are dealing with educational innovations, but this does not diminish their pertinence to IDRC concerns.*

Berman P and M McLaughlin. 1976. Implementation of Educational Innovations. Educational Forum 40(3) 344-370. Deals with the need for adaptation in successful innovation.

Fullan M. 1993. Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform. Falmer Press London UK

Pressman J and A. Wildavsky. 1973. Implementation. University of California Press at Berkeley. An early study of the barriers to effective implementation of complex innovations in social policy.

Schnurr, J and S Holtz (eds). 1998. The Cornerstone of Development: Integrating Environmental, Social and Economic Policies. IDRC (Ottawa) and Lewis Publishers (London)

→ See Chapter 2 "Learning and Policy Integration" (Bernard and Armstrong) discussing integrated policy research (INTESEP) in learning concept terms, followed by a series of Canadian and developing country case studies applying these.

→ See also Armstrong, Greg. 1995. "Integrating Policy: A Matter of Learning" (IDRC, Ottawa) summarizing a workshop on the role of learning in IDRC's integrated policy research.

→ See Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner. How professionals think in action*, London: Temple Smith. and (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. These provide a very clear and reasonably practice-oriented analysis of professional thinking behaviour and growth/learning. The concepts and paradigm presented are directly relevant to the types of people and goals with which IDRC is working, and a good application of adult learning theory. They also link directly with the work Schon did with Chris Argyris (see below)

B. *References related to institutional learning/change approached from a learning perspective.*

Argyris C. and D. Schon. 1978. Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective. Addison-Wesley Publishers. Reading UK.

Douglas, Mary. 1986. How Institutions Think. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse NY.

North, Douglas. 1994. "Economic Performance Through Time". American Economic Review 84(3) 359-368

→ As a particular example of applying a learning perspective to an IDRC institutional/programme development intervention, see also A Bernard. 1993. "The Consortium Graduate School of the Social Sciences: The process of Building an Institution", IDRC Monograph Series.

C. References related to adult learning, particularly in nonformal and informal settings, including people at/in work.

Kidd, J. Roby. 1973. How Adults Learn. Cambridge, New York (revised edition). This is considered one of the basic "readers" making the case for adult learning as a process distinct from the learning of children. Kidd was a pioneer both in Canadian adult education and, especially important, in *internationalizing* the field as a recognized area of theory, policy and practice. He initiated among other things the International Council for Adult Education, out of and in association with which grew the core of much of the current participatory research thinking, work and networking. Many of his students are now leaders in PR throughout the world.

→ See also another "basic" text, rather less reader-friendly and more didactic: Malcolm Knowles. 1970. Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy. Association Press, NY

Tara Fenwick's 2002 paper New understandings of learning in work: Implications for education and training (published version: "Tides of Change: New Themes and Questions in Workplace Learning". in New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Volume 2001. Issue 92/Winter. 3-18) provides a good window on some of the applications of adult education/learning to work. Though not set in a development context per se, this and other references on her website <http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/> are useful academic and applied references to the theme, with implications for the Centre's focus on work, and workers, in various natural resource, health or governance settings (the IKIT and TERN websites included below can be seen in much the same 'opportunity to extrapolate' sense; so too the David Boud reference).

→ See also Fenwick, T. (2003) Rethinking Processes of Adult Learning. Draft material for a chapter in *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 3rd Edition.

In a similar vein, *David Boud* (University of Technology, Sydney) is an influential and prolific education researcher/writer on a number of adult learning themes relevant to IDRC: e.g. theory, practice and facilitation of experience-based learning; learning assessment; learning and work, creating reflective practitioners). An article by Boud asks questions of learner assessment practices in terms of what they do for and against sustainable learning). For example:

→ Andresen, L, Boud, D. & Cohen, R. (2000). Experience-based learning. In Foley, G. (Ed.). *Understanding Adult Education and Training*. Second Edition. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 225-239

→ Boud, D. & Knights, S. (1996). Course design for reflective practice. In Gould, N. & Taylor, I. (Eds.). *Reflective Learning for Social Work: Research, Theory and Practice*. Aldershot, Hants.: Arena, 23-34.

→ Boud, D and Prosser, M. (2002) [Appraising new technologies for learning: a framework for development](#), *Educational Media International*, 39, 3/4, 237-245.
 → Boud, D. (2000). [Sustainable assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society](#). *Studies in Continuing Education*, 22, 2, 151-167 (This article is interesting, in terms of this capacity overview for IDRC for example, in its discussion of whether/how evaluation could contribute to the different research capacity categories, and different degrees/types of competence within each category i.e. strengthening researcher and practitioner conceptualization versus practice.

Adult Learning: from Theory to Practice <http://www.nald.ca/CANORG/herod/index.htm>

Quoting its website, this is an *on-line course* covering a wide range of issues “regarding the theory and practice of adult learning; ... foundational material ... designed in a stand alone format... However, in the interests of making learning more effective, recommendations (are) included regarding options for building in interactivity, and alternate delivery formats. The course is designed to be used by individual tutors in a self-paced, stand-alone format, or as supplemental material for a group endeavour such as a certification program or professional development seminar. Whatever the case, users are encouraged to adjust the course as required to suit their particular needs, as long as it is a “not-for-profit” manner”.

The course is divided into three modules: (1) current adult learning theory; (2) relating the theory to adult education practice and “factors that influence adult teaching and learning”; and (3) “thoughts on and tools for dealing with the myriad of factors that influence adult teaching and learning”. The course aims is to “stimulate” adult learning facilitators (and, in IDRC’s case, project developers and implementers) “to reflect critically on the notion of a teaching-learning continuum”, the core point being that “adult learning is highly individualistic and fluid. As such it requires that tutors be very flexible and utilize a range of teaching approaches and methods in order to enhance learning”. The materials are presented in “plain language”; a glossary and a comprehensive list of resources for further review of the major concepts are provided.

D. Some Multi-use References

→ For theory, policy and practice of adult and nonformal education in/for the *development context*, the [International Council for Adult Education](#) is a good reference, along with its many linkages in developing country regions and its journal, *Convergence* <http://www.icae.org.uy>; <http://www.niace.org.uk/Publications/Periodicals/Convergence>

Quoting its website, the ICAE has been, since its inception in 1973, a “global partnership of adult learners and adult educators and their organizations, and others who promote the use of adult learning as a tool for informed participation of people and sustainable development. In the emergence of knowledge-society the ICAE promotes lifelong learning as a necessary component for people to contribute creatively to their communities and live in independent and democratic societies. Adult and lifelong learning are deeply linked to social, economic and political justice; equality of gender relations; the universal right to learn; living in harmony with the environment; respect for human rights and recognition of cultural diversity, peace and the active involvement of women and men in decisions affecting their lives”.

The Council has members in all regions (Africa, Arab Region, Asia & South Pacific, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and North America) and works to a great extent through what it calls “strategic alliances and partnerships with other global social movements and organizations and lifelong learning-related international institutions”. It was in association with the ICAE that

much of the early work in participatory research for development grew; the Council also played a major role in putting adult and nonformal education into the Jomtien EFA and Rio Environment initiatives. For most of its life in Toronto, the Secretariat is now in Montevideo.

Convergence has been the quarterly journal of the ICAE since 1968 (currently published out of the UK). “Providing a forum for international exchange”, it includes a good mixture of theoretical and practice-based issues in adult and nonformal education as these relate to development, largely from a developing country perspective.

→ For more general references, from which implications for work in a development context can certainly be drawn, the following (with their linkages) are good.

The Informal Education Homepage <http://www.infed.org>

Quoting its website, established in 1995, *infed* “has developed into a website that is accessed around 4 million times a year”, with the aim “to provide a space for people to explore the theory and practice of informal education and lifelong learning;... to encourage educators to develop ways of working and being that foster association, conversation and relationship”. The site is a “not-for-profit site,... funded by individual contributions (and) part of the UK National Grid for Learning. Access to our pages is free and open to all”.

Somewhat UK-centric and northern oriented, this is nonetheless a very good site for its coverage of the main people and trends in the theories and practices of the learning that happens among adults and children outside of classroom settings. Though its point of departure is termed “informal” education, in fact it equally incorporates what generally is called nonformal education and organizational learning. The site managers are identified as professionals in the field and this is shown in their occasional editorial comments as to what they agree with, or not, with respect to a theory, concept or approach. But they do so, typically with a clear rationale, making it easy enough to see and assess, as well as adding to the substance of the issue.

The site provides a reasonable index into the topics covered, but what is better are the links included within each topic: fairly eclectic, but almost always leading to well-written, relevant, informative and interesting discussions of people, ideas or instances. This is less a site for searching out practical guidance on “how to do” adult education, than it is for exploring the very wide range of concepts, paradigms and ways into “the field” which have informed and created it, in terms of individuals, groups, social change etc.

Institute for Knowledge Innovation and Technology/IKIT www.ikit.org

Quoting its website, IKIT “conducts research, develops technology, and helps build communities aimed at advancing beyond ‘best practice’ in education, knowledge work, and knowledge creation”, linking people internationally from “a variety of sectors ... in pooling intellectual resources and participating in projects”. A largely education-based research-oriented site, managed out of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto), the guiding paradigm is that “more powerful theories of knowledge and expertise are needed to move education and training beyond existing best practices. On this basis, IKIT has developed a knowledge-building pedagogy that puts ideas at the centre and that moves problem-based learning to a new level. The principal effort of IKIT's knowledge building enterprise has been to extend the limits of the possible in education and knowledge work”.

A key distinction it IKIT makes in this is between *knowledge building* and *learning*, the latter “the process through which the cultural capital of a society is made available to successive generations”, while the former is “the deliberate effort to increase the cultural capital....

Knowledge building is work on the creation and improvement of ideas. The dynamic is social, resulting in the creation of public knowledge. In contrast to knowledge situated within the individual mind (the traditional concern of education) and knowledge situated in the practice of groups (the concern of situated cognition and communities of practice), public knowledge has an out-in-the-world character. Public knowledge can itself become an object of inquiry and the basis for further knowledge building. Thus there is the possibility of a knowledge building dynamic that drives the continual creation and advancement of new knowledge”.

The principal referent for the IKIP work is the school, but inasmuch as the theory is meant to be developmental – applying to childhood through to adulthood – and involving teachers as critical agents of knowledge building who must themselves engage in the process, much of what the site (managed by OISE professors M Scardamalia and C Bereiter) and its contributors deal with, can be related to IDRC’s research and CD concerns. For example, its concept of the “Knowledge Society” as it is being developed within a KS Network:

“Schools, workplaces, and community and health care organizations are part of a network of institutions, all undergoing change due to new information and communication technologies. These technologies are changing both the nature and expectations for knowledge work. It is generally accepted that computer-supported extended learning communities are required to achieve the much heralded ‘knowledge society.’ But despite a great deal of talk about such a society and the new 21st-century skills it will require, there is little analysis of what it might look like or how we are to achieve its anticipated knowledge advances. What does seem clear is that there is urgent need for design experiments aimed at exploring challenges and implications. The KSN helps to define a vision of a knowledge society”.

Below are a few references from the website, addressing issues of knowledge: its meaning, use, improvement and generation. They are interesting and IDRC-relevant in terms both of CD and of the wider issues of knowledge-for-development research with which the Centre is dealing and learning as a theme underlying these

Bereiter, C. and M. Scardamalia. 2003. “Learning to Work Creatively with Knowledge”. in E De Corte et al (eds). Unravelling Basic Components and Dimensions of Powerful Learning Environments. EARLI Advances in Learning and Instruction Series.

Bereiter, C. 2002. “Design Research for Sustained innovation”. in Cognitive Studies, Bulletin of the Japanese Cognitive Science Society. 9(3), 321-27

Scardamalia, M. 2002. Collective Cognitive Responsibility for the Advancement of Knowledge”. chapter 4 in B Smith (ed) Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society. Chicago Open Court.

Bereiter, C. and M. Scardamalia. 1993. “Preface” in Surpassing Ourselves: An Inquiry into the Nature and Implications of Expertise. La Salle Illinois. Open Court.

→ Like adult learning and work, **adult learning and the new technologies** is a growing areas of theoretical and, especially, practical concern through the literature.

Technology and Education Research Network/TERN www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/tern/mainIE.htm

Quoting its website, TERN was created through special UBC funding intended to “sponsor critical, paradigm-shifting research not ‘normally’ funded”. Basically, it provides a “space for research being done in, about, or on British Columbia (and) although based at the University of British Columbia, (it) is interested in work done by non-university researchers,

policy analysts, cultural studies advocates, activist and community groups and those involved in research and development in business, industry or government”.

The definitions of both ‘technology’ and ‘research’ are “broad”, but “share the notion that research matters. In the gold rush atmosphere around education and technology, mistakes are being made and blunders committed. TERN will not prevent them. But, by asking what we hope are the right questions, those committed to closing music and art programs to save money for computers and other uncritical advocates of techno-zealotry, might be persuaded to think again. Our focus here is on theorizing research about technology and education. There is no one right way to do pedagogy. But numerous issues merit consideration. Hence, the focus is on framing research (to address the fact that programmes are increasingly) being shaped by the commodification of education, the arrival of distributed learning, the collapse of disciplines, and loss of confidence in scientism and functionalist discourse. This doesn’t mean we trot out the tried and true research methodologies of times past”.

The core of the site/project is in the Adult Education group in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC (manager: Dr Roger Boshier) -- described as having “long-standing interest in learning which occurs in nonformal and informal settings as well as substantial links with distance education and other groups developing the conceptual and operational dimensions of distributed learning within the context of lifelong education”. TERN and the Adult Education group in general have links with institutional partners elsewhere in Canada and overseas, including China, Brazil, Singapore, Hong Kong.

→ See also Burge, E. J., D. Laroque and C. Boak. 23000. “Baring Professional Souls: Reflections On Web Life”. Journal of Distance Education/Revue de l'enseignement à distance. ISSN: 0830-0445
[HTTP://CADE.ATHABASCAU.CA/VOL15.1/BURGE.HTML](http://CADE.ATHABASCAU.CA/VOL15.1/BURGE.HTML)

→ See also Imel, Susan, 2002, “Learning Technologies in Adult Education: Myths and Realities” no. 17. ERIC Clearing House on Adult, Career and Vocational Education <http://www.cete.org/acve/docs/mr00032.pdf>

New Horizons in Adult Education <http://www.nova.edu/~aed/newhorizons.html>

Quoting its website, this is an “electronic journal focused on current research and ideas in adult education. It is a refereed journal, published two or three times each year, which provides graduate students, faculty, researchers, and adult education practitioners with a means for publishing their current thinking and research within adult education and related fields. New Horizons in Adult Education publishes research, thought pieces, book reviews, conceptual analyses, case studies, and invitational columns. The journal is transmitted to subscribers around the world at no fee through the electronic network of AEDNET. The contents of the journal are indexed in the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) database”.

As a refereed journal, the range of topics covered is not extensive, and there is a tendency toward the academic and theoretical, but it does provide a way into some of the issues in adult and organizational learning.

Adult Education Research Conference <http://edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc>

The AERC is one of the best omnibus reference sources for the field (at least as represented from the North). Quoting its website, it “is an annual North American conference that provides a forum for adult education researchers to share their experiences and the results of their studies with students, other researchers, and practitioners from around the world”. This site

includes the abstracts and papers presented at several years of Conferences and in so doing provides a very good overview of the range of issues addressed through an adult education and learning lens as well as reference to many if not most of the main theorists and practitioners in the field. The website is managed out of UBC and there is a strong Canadian representation in the papers.

Interestingly, and unfortunately, there is a major gap in materials and references dealing with and from the developing countries. No doubt at least in part a function of the AERC being a North American event, papers on experiences and people from these regions are few, as are paradigms on adult learning and perspectives on nonformal education specifically as development process and modality. In terms of generic adult learning and social change issues, there is no doubt enough on this site to prove useful to all IDRC programme areas in varying respects. In terms of “the South” and implications for the more PR programme approaches, examples are fewer and ideas will have to be extrapolated.

Some examples follow. These are all quite short (8 pages on average) and are not, therefore, comprehensively argued or detailed. In some cases, the value is in a single point made and none provide a full-press guideline for “how to”. Most, however, do indicate key issues on a range of themes and, in many, the bibliographies are excellent resources for thinkers, writers and themes significant to the field.

NB: Many of the papers presented in the AERC and included in the website are reports of research. As such, they include a range of methodologies, especially qualitative and learner-centred, used in exploring issues of adult learning/education which may be useful to any planning analyses or evaluations IDRC might do. (For example: Baptiste, Ian et al. 2001. “Anatomy of Adults’ Learning Experiences: A Phenomenological Inquiry”).

→ On varying theories and typologies of adult learning and education

Caffarella R. S. and S. Merriam. 1999. “Perspectives on Adult Learning: Framing Our Research”

Fenwick, T. 1999. “Reflection Plus 4 - Classifying Alternate Perspectives in Experiential Learning: Rationale and Classificatory Method”

Hemphill, D. F. 1999. “The Blues and the Scientific Method: Codified Cultural Schemas and Understanding Adult Cognition from a Multicultural Perspective”

Mezirow, J. 1999. “Transformation Theory: Post-modern Issues” (Mezirow is considered a significant theorist in adult learning, based on his development of this theory which is given wide credibility/elaboration in the field)

Peterson, S. and M. K. Cooper. 1999. “Themes of Adult Learning and Development in Human Resource Development” (distinguished the two in terms of who sets and controls the learning agenda).

Boud D. and N. Miller. 1998. “Animating Learning: New Conceptions of the Role of the Person Who Works with Learners” (Boud, as noted above, is a high-profile theorist and writer in various areas of adult learning)

Daley, B. J. 1998. “Novice to Expert: How Do Professionals Learn?”

→ On evaluating learning/learner outcomes, at individual and programmatic levels

Bingman, MB. 2001. “Action Research on Documenting Learner Outcomes:

Can We Move Beyond the Workforce Investment Act?”

Grudens-Schuck, N. 2000. “Extension and Grassroots Educators’ Approaches to Participatory Education: Interrelationships among Training, Worldview, and Institutional Support”.

Jones, D. J. 2000. “Towards A Generic Approach to Assessment in Adult And Continuing Education”.

- Easton, P. and C. Capacci. 1999. "Grassroots Dissemination of Adult Education Research in Africa: Results of Recent Experience in Benin and Botswana" (this is actually a meta-evaluation insofar as it is assessing the success of a CD process enabling better doing and dissemination of research on development-oriented learning)
- Slusarski, S. B. 1999. "Learners' Perspectives of the Train-the-Trainer Program in Creating the Role of Classroom Trainer" (example of an area of CD evaluation research question IDRC might explore)

→ On linking learning into other development interventions/initiatives e.g. community learning: change processes

- Odoch, P. 2000. "The Role of Adult Education and skills Training in promoting Planned Change and Localization: The Case of ACORD-NEBBI Community Development Programme in Uganda".
- Preece, J. 2000. "Making the Curriculum Culturally Relevant: Relations between the Global and Local"
- Moore, B. and L. H. Hill. 1998. "Preaching What We Practice: Theories-in-Use in Community Development"
- Hill, L. H. and B Moore. 1999. "Metaphors in Practice: Theories-in-Use Among Diverse Community Development Practitioners" (these last two also suggest a way into situation analyses, needs assessment and/or evaluating CD/adult learning within the context of PR projects).