Professionalization in Adult Literacy Practice in Ontario

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1. Introduction

Professionalization has been one of the least studied approaches to professional development and performance improvement in the field of adult literacy in Ontario. Both recent policy and research initiatives have failed to identify and explore the potential professionalization carries for improved outcomes for both practitioners and learners.

Ontario's adult literacy practitioners and policy-makers have been focused on developing professional development opportunities through face-to-face or on-line workshops, self-study and college courses. However, little effort has been made to explore other further-reaching approaches to professionalization. This is in strong contrast to that of practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in many other jurisdictions in advanced industrialized countries which increasingly have been debating and advocating professionalism, and experimenting with models of certification.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition's (OLC) recent projects have consistently pointed to the need to study and develop our understanding of professionalization, particularly within the context of recent developments in adult literacy policy framework in Ontario. The purpose of this knowledge exchange project is to build an initial knowledge base and to make the case for initiating a serious and active discussion on professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario.

Written first and foremost as a _call for dialogue,' this paper does not address questions such as: *Which particular models of professionalization are more suitable for Ontario? Is professionalization viable? What kind of positions do provincial stakeholders hold with regard to professionalization? Is the institutional diversity in literacy program delivery a major obstacle? How about reluctance/resistance on the part of those with vested interests? Is there a political appetite for professionalization in the province?* These and other crucial questions will need to be part of a province-wide dialogue involving all stakeholders. Greater understanding will need to be promoted, and new and constructive relationships will need to be established. Before any of that can materialize, however, we need to *start* that dialogue.

The necessity to develop an improved provincial policy framework has been clearly outlined in a recent report prepared for the Government: *Ontario Learns.*[1] Is professionalism of practitioners one of the defining characteristics of such an improved policy framework? The following are from this report:[2]

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[1] Kathleen Wynne, ―Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System" (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2005). This report was the outcome of the 2004 Adult Education Review which was launched at the request of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

[2] Kathleen Wynne, ―Ontario Learns" p.51.

[Adult Education] stakeholders pointed out that there is no systematic approach to the professional development of practitioners, nor are there systematic opportunities to share best practices. There may be opportunities to build a community of practice among adult education practitioners that supports continuous improvement in the quality of instruction in adult education… An opportunity exists to broaden [the Ontario Government's K-12 education] vision to include adult education and thus engage the adult education community in this quest for excellence, and to extend the moral purpose of publicly funded education to embrace adult education in Ontario.

The report then goes on recommend more work to explore the facts underlying the concerns of the stakeholders, and to find more information about what is actually happening in individual communities and in particular program areas across Ontario.

The question then, for the purposes of this study, is whether professionalization of practitioners could help engage the adult literacy community in its quest for excellence and help extend the moral purpose of publicly funded education to embrace adult education in Ontario.

This paper reflects upon the findings of the OLC's research on the topic as part of a *knowledge exchange project* funded by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning. In carrying out the project, the OLC has conducted:

- library and internet research
- phone interviews[3] with 10 key informants/experts in the field of adult education and literacy
- face-to-face interviews with a limited number of experts in the field of adult education and literacy.

The paper consists of five main sections. Section 2 highlights the factors that have come into play in recent years to warrant our attention toward professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario. Section 3 reflects upon international trends by shedding light upon the recent momentum observed in England, New Zealand and the US. Section 4 provides a descriptive account of the recent professionalization initiatives in K-12 education in Ontario and reflects upon some of the aspects of professionalization in TESL and some other professions, with a view to considering the implications of those experiences. Section 5 takes a detailed look at the most consequential factor warranting our attention toward professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario: existing and new demands for performance accountability within the field. Section 6 discusses the conflict and controversy around different visions of adult literacy in Ontario using the analytic concept of *substantive accountability*.

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[3] Key informants/experts were asked non-formal, open ended questions on various issues, with a particular emphasis upon finding more about possible _bottlenecks' in the process of professionalization.

2. Why Professionalization? Why Now?

A wide range of factors have come into play in recent years to warrant our attention toward professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario. The OLC's analysis indicates all of these factors have serious implications for the state of professionalism of practitioners in Ontario; they all point to the need to study and develop our understanding of professionalization in our field. Below, these factors are highlighted; in the following sections, certain aspects of their conceptual and causal links to professionalization will be analyzed in greater detail.

a. What is Professionalization?

Professionalization should be conceptually differentiated from *professional development* in the sense that professionalization focuses on more than enhancement of individual skills of literacy practitioners; it encompasses the fundamentally important dimension of capacity-building for the adult literacy field as a whole. This dimension includes such practices as licensing and certification which are better captured by the concept of professionalization.

Enhancing and maintaining practitioner quality through professional development involves a degree of randomness because of intervening factors such as practitioner-related (individual) factors, literacy field-wide (system-level) factors and society-wide (environmental) factors.

- *Individual factors* include practitioners' experience, knowledge, and attitudes about teaching as they enter a program of professional development.

- *System-level factors* include the structure of and support offered by delivery institutions and programs, overall levels of funding, practitioners' working conditions, their access to resources, professional development and information, colleagues and directors, policy makers' attitudes and approach toward practitioners.

- *Environmental factors* include the entire range of socio-political and economic factors.

Professionalization takes a systematic approach to the enhancement and maintenance of practitioner quality by relying upon relatively stable procedures of a professional structure. By doing so, it aims to address the issue of randomness of intervening factors at the individual and system levels.

Professionalization, as it is understood and experienced in various professions, includes the following (amongst others not addressed here): licensing, certification, measurement, assessment, evaluation, and professional development.

i. Licensing and Certification[4]

Licensing serves as the entry-point to professions and is usually carried out by a licensing body in order to ensure that those who are licensed possess the necessary knowledge and skills to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively. Through appropriate legislation, the licensing body attains legal status and enforcement capability.

A licensing system guards the profession and the public from unqualified and, in some cases, ‗unsuitable' individuals from seeking to practice. In that sense, ―licensing is associated more closely with the concept of accountability in that a licensed professional is given permission to work with the public, and that permission may be removed by the professional licensing body if standards are not maintained."[5]

Certification usually refers to a system where a professional body decides to certify accomplished practice. With certification, higher levels of study and practice are targeted, and therefore certificates are granted only to those who demonstrate exemplary knowledge and skills. Periodic recertification might be required depending on the characteristics of the profession. Certification might permit practitioners to have additional opportunities, such as doctors being allowed to open private practices.

Increasingly more common within the self-regulated professions is the system of registration. ―Registration carries the same meaning as certification, but points to the role of professional body or regulatory authority (Teaching Councils or Colleges, for example) to maintain a current list of certified (or registered) practitioners."[6]

Licensing, certification and registration have often been used interchangeably, leading to some confusion in terms of comparing their use from one jurisdiction to another.[7] In the K-12 system in Ontario, for example, both certification and registration are legislated by the provincial government and administered by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). ―Also, given that there is no separate teacher licensing system in Ontario, the term certification refers both to the policies and procedures that allow entry to the profession and to the processes that acknowledge accomplished practice."[8] Some self-regulated professions such as dentists and architects in Ontario on the other hand, differentiate between registration, licensure and/or certification.

Licensing, certification and registration might be implemented in stages. *Initial, interim, provisional*, or *temporary* are some of the labels which refer to early stages. Usually, *initial* or *interim* licenses carry with them certain conditions such as periodic

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[4] The following two sub-sections build largely upon a recent report prepared by Larsen et al for the Ontario Ministry of Education: Marianne Larsen et al., ―Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments" A Report for the Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education, May 2005.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

requirements for renewal or upgrading of licenses. ⁻More advanced types of licenses are referred to as professional, permanent, or full certificates. Most of the latter are issued for life but may, under certain circumstances, be revoked or cancelled either by the state or professional regulating body."[9]

Additional assessments, course work, or other forms of professional development might be required to maintain a practitioner's status of certification. Re-certification processes vary in relation to the number and duration of professional activities and/or assessments to be completed. ⁻For instance, recertification of teachers is an annual obligation in a small number of jurisdictions and a requirement every 3 to 10 years in most locations where this process is in place. However, in other places (e.g. England and Scotland), registration is for life or until some action to deregister takes place."[10]

The least restrictive model, in most jurisdictions, is registration. It refers to a system in which a governing body issues a certificate of registration and maintains a list of registered members of the profession. Often used interchangeably with the term registration, certification focuses on providing credentials to members and is designed to guard the profession and raise the profile of the profession. Licensing, the most restrictive form of regulation, is a statutory requirement that aims to protect the public by ensuring that minimum standards are maintained. In a licensing system, governments usually delegate the authority to regulate the profession to a private or an arms-length public agency.

ii. Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation

Broadly, measurement is defined as the assignment of numbers to events or attributes according to some rules. In addition, the goal of measurement is to ⁻provide accurate information under certain prescribed conditions, and the criterion for accuracy of measurement is reliability."[11] Typically, this quantitative term has been used mostly in the realm of accountability-related testing in various professions.

Two chronic problems plague measurement when it comes to adult literacy: first, the full reality of adult literacy may never be fully captured in numbers. And second, in measuring things that can be counted or expressed in quantifiable terms, we are led to the illusion that only the measurable really matters.

Assessment is the process of gathering information in order to understand and describe practitioner performance. Assessment relates specifically to the collection of information related to the quality of practitioner skills, knowledge, and professional growth. ⁻Testing,

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] R. J. Wilson and R. Rees, ⁻The ecology of assessment: Evaluation in educational settings" *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol:15, p.215-228, 1990 quoted in: Marianne Larsen et al., ⁻Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

for example, is one part of assessment, and includes particular kinds of activities such as paper-and-pencil tests, provincial assessment instruments, or examinations."[12]

> The process of assessment can be formative when the purpose is to _inform the process of learning while it is occurring,' or summative, when the process of making judgments or conclusions occurs at the end of a course or program. Typically, formative (or informal) assessment is conducted _with the intent to improve' the learning process and is an important feature of growth-oriented models. Whereas, summative assessment is most-often conducted at the end of a set of learning events and is used as a final (and sometimes the only) step toward evaluating or judging that learning within an accountability-oriented model.[13]

Evaluation is used to denote the process or model used to make a judgment or decision about professional growth. Judgment is a complementary component of decision-making, and it involves matching the measurement information collected against a set of expectations.

> Decision making, then, requires the selection of a course or courses of action, derived from the measurement; such as the decisions related to licensure or certification. This concept is related to assessment in that the central feature of evaluation stems from judgments made by evaluators as they utilize measurement information relative to achievement criteria. Evaluation can be conceived as the three inter-related processes of measurement, judgment, and decision-making, no matter what the context.[14]

Assessment is the process of collecting information or data about teachers for certification and evaluation, the processes of measurement, judgment, and decision-making regarding certification.[15]

iii. Professional Development

Professional development can be defined as the provision of activities designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and understanding of practitioners in ways that lead to change in their thinking and practice. As the need for professional development increases in adult education, a number of problematic issues have been identified as pressing. Some of these are[16]

- the need to incorporate technology into professional development
- assessment of professional development (efficiency and effectiveness)

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[12] Marianne Larsen et al., ─Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

[13] R. J. Wilson, *Assessing students in classrooms and schools*. (Scarborough, Ontario, Allyn and Bacon Canada, 1996) quoted in: Marianne Larsen et al., ─Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

[14] Marianne Larsen et al., ─Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

[15] In Ontario' K-12 system, the term evaluation has been used to refer to the processes associated with teacher performance appraisals and assessment to relate to assessments for the purposes of teacher certification.

[16] K. P. King and P. A. Lawler, ─Trends and Issues in the Professional Development of Teachers of Adults" New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education No: 98 Summer 2003.

- the focus (substantive) of professional development[17]
- the challenge of funding
- learner evaluation and the place of testing.

Traditionally, behaviourist learning theory has been highly influential in the professional development of practitioners in adult education.[18] ―Through this theory, knowledge is viewed as passive and an automated response to external factors in the environment. Hence the workshop model of presenting information to a passive audience."[19] Increasingly, however, professional development is viewed through a constructivist lens, and the practitioners, like all adult learners, are perceived as constructing new knowledge through a process of interweaving background experience and prior knowledge. In this model, knowledge cannot be transmitted.[20] Because of the nature of adult learning, professional development of practitioners often focuses on broad topics, leaving individual practitioners the task of adapting such general information to their specific learners.

Androgogy, the theory behind adult learning, varies in some aspects from pedagogy in the situational conditions of learning because, amongst other reasons, adults are more demanding in their need for relevance and clear objectives.[21] Practitioner professional development is seen as more successful when it is planned and developed by other practitioners with an engaging design that allows time for reflection and discussion, and has a balance between theory and practice.[22] Teachers of adults are themselves adult learners whose learning differences and needs for application, critical reflection, respect and support need to be understood.[23]

King and Lawler put forward a number of arguments as guidelines for a new vision for professional development of adult education practitioners; according to them, professional development:[24]

- is adult education
- is learner-centered
- is transformative learning
- needs to address motivation
- needs to address technology learning.

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[17] This issue is addressed in detail in section 6.
[18] J. D. Nowlan, ―Professional Development Through Information and Communication Technologies" *International Electronic Journal For Leadership in Learning* Vol: 5, 2001.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] K. P. King and P. A. Lawler, ―Trends and Issues in the Professional Development of Teachers of Adults"
[24] Ibid.

b. New Developments in Ontario's Adult Literacy Policy Framework

New developments highlighted in the following sub-sections are factors that warrant our attention toward discussing professionalization. The underlying assumption here is that professionalization is a viable method of improving performance in adult education through enhancement and maintenance of the quality of practitioners.

Various researchers have noted the significance of learning and professional development as key defining characteristics of teacher quality in K-12 education.[25] Moreover, the relationship between professionalization, teacher quality, and student achievement in K-12 has also been established within academic research. Phillips has referenced several empirical studies that directly related teacher professional development experiences to student outcomes.[26]

To what extent are the findings of K-12 professional development related research relevant within the context of adult education?[27] Smith et al,[28] addressing this question, conclude that professional development is necessary but not sufficient by itself to help adult education practitioners to learn about and adopt new practices that promise to improve the quality of service delivery. The advantage of the K-12 system lies in the fact that professionalization has already advanced significantly, taking the element of randomness out of quality improvement in teaching. Addressing the same question, Garet et al conclude that ―there is a clear need for new, systematic research on the effectiveness of alternative strategies for professional development"[29] in adult education.

i. Performance Accountability and Performance Funding

There is a serious and growing need to ensure that literacy practitioners possess the capacity to respond to existing and new demands for accountability within the field. As adult literacy policy increasingly becomes part of and draws on the broader public policy debate, it is concurrently affected by trends that impact the entire public sphere in Ontario and across Canada and the Western World. The new accountability framework of the Ontario Public Service (OPS), and the global trend toward *performance accountability* in the public sphere are undoubtedly amongst the most important of such trends. In 2004,

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[25] L. Darling- Hammond et al., *A license to teach: Raising standards for teaching.* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999); J. W. Little, ―Organizing Schools for Teacher Learning" in L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.) *Teaching as a Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice of Education*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1999); S. Phillips, *Teacher Quality in Canada*, (Kelowna, B.C.: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2002).

[26] S. Phillips, *Teacher Quality in Canada*

[27] A fundamentally important distinction here is that the relevance of research on professional development in K-12, and the relevance of the professionalization in K-12 education as a model are two conceptually different phenomena.

[28] Cristine Smith et al., *How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education* NCSALL Reports #25, November 2003.

[29] M. S. Garet, ―What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers" *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol: 38, No: 4, 2001.

Ontario's Auditor General affirmed the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities' (MTCU) mandate to advance the performance accountability framework of the Literacy and Basic Skills Program (LBS), and to broaden the implementation of measures of performance funding.

Amongst the factors which warrant our attention toward professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario, this is the most consequential; in a sense, the other factors interact with professionalization as subsets of the accountability factor. The fifth section of the paper addresses the performance accountability factor in considerable detail.

ii. A Workforce/Workplace Focus as part of an Economic-Focused Approach to Adult Literacy Programming

Currently, practitioner training geared toward workforce/workplace focused literacy is a high priority activity for the MTCU (as well as the federal government),[30] along with the development of learning and teaching materials.[31] Various projects/activities in the province have laid the foundation to build the expertise and resources necessary to respond to the challenges of practitioner training in workforce/workplace literacy in the last few years. However, more needs to be done toward preparing Ontario's literacy practitioners toward a workforce/workplace focus.[32]

The economic-focused approach sees adult education and literacy in terms of their links with employment possibilities, human-resource planning, and the economy. Reports on adult education from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provide some of the best examples of this approach.

Historically, adult education in Canada has had a broad base and has covered a wide variety of purposes and activities. The Antigonish Movement, Farm Radio Forum, and the Fogo Island Process are examples of this. These programs included community development and social justice visions and worked to strengthen local communities. Even some of these programs, however, placed emphasis on community economic development.[33]

The Ontario Government subscribes to an economics-focused approach which sees adult education and skills training as an economic policy instrument in an increasing number of

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[30] Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) website: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/olt/ADULTLLES/CFP-2006/National/Business-Labour.shtml

[31] A new workplace literacy strategy in Ontario has been in place in Ontario since 2001: MTCU, Workplace Preparation Branch, Literacy and Basic Skills Section, ―Literacy for the workplace: Expanding the skills of Ontario's workforce" *Literacy and basic skills -LBS Program Guidelines* October 2000. For more on workplace literacy programming in Ontario, see: *"Workplace/Workforce Literacy: Building Linkages for Action"* Symposium Report, The Ontario Literacy Coalition. Toronto, Ontario. May 31, 2005 and Sue Folinsbee, *The Ontario Literacy Coalition's Workplace/Workforce Literacy Symposium: Reflections Paper*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, May 2005.

[32] K. Geraci, Workplace *Educator Professional Development*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, September 2002.

[33] G. Selman et al., *The foundations of adult education in Canada* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1998).

policy documents. In Ontario, this approach has had a tremendous impact on the entire range of educational policies and practices. A 1994 report clearly indicates that this approach predates the Mike Harris government.[34]

Canada's federal government,[35] for the most part, subscribes to an economics-focused approach to adult education. A 2002 policy report titled *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians* clearly outlines Ottawa's vision regarding adult education in Canada:[36]

> To remain competitive and keep up with the accelerating pace of technological change, Canada must continuously renew and upgrade the skills of its workforce. We can no longer assume that the skills acquired in youth will carry workers through their active lives. Rather, the working life of most adults must be a period of continuous learning.

b. The Rising Status of Adult Literacy and Growing Needs and Demands of Ontario's Practitioners

Adult literacy is rising in significance on the policy agenda of the OECD, and the European Union (EU), and many developed and developing countries, as well as Ontario. Particularly since the mid-1990s, there has been growing interest in literacy and basic skills training in Ontario's policy communities.[37] Adult literacy has been accorded higher importance in many provincial policy documents on education and training in Ontario in recent years, and the rationale for promoting it has been defined in key government reports.[38]

A slowly but steadily growing recognition that adult literacy programs and policy are highly instrumental to some of Ontario's significant challenges is indeed encouraging. There is, however, a significant gap between the current policy discourse and the significant funding shortfall currently facing Ontario's adult literacy service delivery. This gap creates particularly challenging work conditions for literacy practitioners in certain sectors, and impacts potential policy outcomes negatively. Professionalization of adult literacy practitioners may play a key role in bridging that gap by raising the status of the profession.

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[34] Ontario, *Lifelong Learning and the New Economy*. Premier's Council on Economic Renewal, 1994.

[35] Under the Canadian Constitution, provincial and territorial governments have exclusive responsibility for all levels of education. The federal government provides support to adult education through fiscal transfers to the provinces and territories, and by funding research. In that sense, the federal government is a crucial partner for Ontario.

[36] Human Resources Development Canada, *Knowledge matters: Skills and learning for Canadians* (Ottawa: 2002).

[37] The term policy community to refer to the set of actors, public and private, that coalesces around an issue area and share a common interest in shaping its development. The policy community consists of two parts: the attentive public, who maintains a watching brief on developments, and the sub-government, those actively engaged in policy design or implementation.

[38] In 2004, the Ontario Government undertook a comprehensive review of adult education: Kathleen Wynne, ―Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System" Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2005.

This is a situation in which on the one hand, improving outcomes are expected from adult literacy programming, and on the other, stagnating levels of financial incentives and professional development opportunities are available to deliverers of those programs. It is in this context that increasing the recognition of the value of literacy practitioners and helping policy makers and the public appreciate what good practitioners do becomes the task at hand. Sometimes referred to as ‗raising the status of the profession,‗ this is a typical example of one of the major benefits of professionalization.

c. Changing Dynamics and Needs of Ontario's Labour Market and Canada's 'Productivity Gap'

A review of the multi-disciplinary literature on the dynamics and needs of Ontario‗s labour market clearly indicates that Ontario, like other jurisdictions in the OECD, has evolved into a knowledge based economy, one that places a premium on literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills. These skills are now regarded as ‗foundational‗ for many jobs in today‗s labour market. While Canada‗s estimated labour supply at higher education levels seems enough to meet today‗s and future labour market needs, a large percentage of Canadians do not have these foundational literacy skills required for lifelong success in the labour market.[39]

A key challenge for Ontario is to ensure that our people and businesses are able to take advantage of, and adjust quickly to, changes brought about by technological advances and globalization. These require greater ‗flexibility‗ and ‗responsiveness‗ in terms of both employment and training. In a flexible and responsive labour market Canadians with low literacy skills will face the most difficulty in adapting to change.

The foundational skills in today‗s labour market have a direct impact upon productivity growth which is the fundamental driver of improvements in our real incomes and living standards over the long term. Productivity gains increase the economic pie, freeing additional resources that can be invested to meet the needs of Canadians in areas such as health care, education, the environment, public infrastructures and social security.

Since the 1990s, Canada's productivity growth has lagged significantly behind that of its largest trading partner, the United States (US). In 2004, labour productivity in the US grew by 3.6 per cent; more than triple Canada‗s 1.1 per cent rate. In the same year, this long term trend translated into an annual income gap with the US of US$8,086 per person.

This negative trend has generated a great deal of research interest and a lively debate, helping us to understand the reasons for Canada's relatively weak productivity record and the nature of productivity growth in Canada. Now it is time for finding effective policy

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[39] According to the latest International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2003 (IALLS), 4 in 10 working-age Canadians – 14 million people – do not have those literacy skills necessary for lifelong success in the labour market. (i.e., they rank lower than IALLS level 3.)

responses. A high-performance literacy and basic skills training system has already been identified as such by Ontario's policy makers.

The task of meeting the foundational skills needs of Ontario's labour market requires a comprehensive and ‗high performance' literacy and basic skills training system. In order to push institutional performance up in service delivery, the MTCU has introduced a wide range of policy initiatives/reforms since the late 1990s. In order to successfully attain new performance targets and adjust to new initiatives, delivery agencies need support in the form of capacity building measures, including professional development of practitioners. Performance measurement per se, does not amount to a ―high performance" service delivery system. The main emphasis needs to be placed on the effective management of that performance, rather than on the measurement of it.

3. International Trends

It is now well known that Anglophone democracies have been borrowing education policy reform models from each other.[40] A comparative look at educational reforms and trends broadly in jurisdictions such as England - UK, New Zealand, and the US, quickly reveals striking similarities with Ontario. With regard to adult literacy, however, Ontario needs to do more to remain competitive with these jurisdictions where recent policy initiatives have been gathering momentum. The contrast with Ontario's current realities of professionalization in adult literacy is particularly noteworthy.

In their labour markets, these jurisdictions are facing challenges similar to Ontario's. Most have aging populations and are facing skill shortages in emerging areas of their economies. Employment in rural, mining and manufacturing industries is in decline, while employment in the service and information technology sectors is rising. All face similar economic and social challenges in what the OECD has described as the 'information age'. All have participated in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), and have made significant policy responses to it: they have adopted workforce/workplace economic-focused approaches to adult education and literacy and skills training in order to address future labour market needs.[41]

Although the levels of professionalism of practitioners across these jurisdictions reflect the relatively marginal standing of the field of adult literacy in comparison to K-12 education, professionalization of literacy practitioners is increasingly becoming prominent on the literacy policy agenda of these jurisdictions. Today, campaigns for greater professionalism are underway in most of these jurisdictions with varying degrees of urgency and success.

a. England – United Kingdom (UK)

Since the publication in 1999 of *A Fresh Start* (also referred to as the Moser Report), there has been a strong policy focus on the need to improve adult literacy and numeracy in England.[42] A web of government and arms-length agencies, in collaboration with national agencies, has been acting upon the recommendations of the Moser Report. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own strategies to improve adult basic skills.

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[40] Grazia Scoppio, ―Common Trends of Standardisation, Accountability, Devolution and Choice in the Educational Policies of England, U.K., California, U.S.A., and Ontario, Canada" *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Vol: 2 No: 2 2002.
[41] Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, *Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs – Support document* 2004.
[42] National Literacy Trust (England, UK) ―Overview of Government approaches" http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/adultgov.html#Overview (August 2006)

Since September 2002, all new teachers who wish to specialize in teaching adult literacy and numeracy need to gain qualifications that meet national (Lifelong Learning United Kingdom - LLUK) standards in the form of *subject specifications*.[43] LLUK is the national body (registered charity) responsible for the professional development of all those working in community learning and development; further education; higher education; libraries, archives and information services; and work-based learning. (Since January 2004, LLUK has taken over the work of three former national training organizations.)

The new LLUK subject specifications are set at levels 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework. They have been designed to ensure that all new teachers of adult literacy and numeracy are equipped with the appropriate and relevant knowledge, understanding and personal skills in their subject area. These specifications are used in specialist teacher training, in specialist modules for continuing professional development and in other staff in-service training.[44] For the first time in England, teachers of adult literacy and numeracy have the opportunity to work towards professional teaching qualifications.[45]

Although the introduction of subject specifications broke new ground in the UK, policy makers admit that there is still a long way to go in terms of professionalizing teaching in adult literacy.[46] A rapid increase in the number of literacy learners in recent years has resulted in a serious shortage of qualified and experienced teachers and initial delays in introduction of new teaching qualifications has aggravated this problem.[47]

The English Government's firm commitment to professionalize the literacy teaching workforce and improve the quality of teaching provision is set out in its *Skills for Life* strategy (2001). The Skills for Life Strategy Unit (formerly the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit) within the Department for Education and Skills is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy, and this is overseen by a Cabinet Committee across all the relevant government departments. The Unit works with a range of partners to deliver this agenda, including the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), LLUK and the new Quality Improvement Agency (QIA)[48] for

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[43] Department for Education and Skills (UK), ―Further Education National Training Organization Subject Specifications" http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/FENTO_Subject_Specifications (August 2006).
[44] Ibid.
[45] Department for Education and Skills (UK), ―Further Education National Training Organization Subject Specifications – Foreword." http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Foreword (August 2006)
[46] Ibid.
[47] Adult Learning Inspectorate, Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages: a survey of current practice in post-16 and adult provision" 2003.
[48] QIA is a charity organization, with a board of trustees recruited through open competition and appointed by ministers. It leads the development of the improvement strategies in the learning and skills sector in partnership with other English and national (UK) organizations including:
  * The Department for Education and Skills
  * The Learning and Skills Council
  * Jobcentre Plus
  * Adult Learning Inspectorate
  * Ofsted
  * Lifelong Learning UK Sector Skills Council

lifelong learning. The Unit has established a register of all teachers who have completed the required stages of the further education teacher training qualifications.

The Department for Education and Skills policy vision is to oversee increasing professionalization in the adult literacy field; the Department's intention is to ―raise the status of the profession and confirm that teaching literacy and numeracy is a professional activity that does not differ in demand or expectation from teaching any other subject area."[49]

Institutions awarding these qualifications are being broadened from universities to include other organizations.[50] There are now several higher education colleges that offer degree level qualifications, and teaching is inspected by the OFSTED and the ALI. ALI began work in April 2001, following the recommendations of the Moser Report and bringing together inspection of adult education and work-based training into a single system. There have been major staff training initiatives in Further Education colleges, in particular the Basic Skills Quality Initiative. These initiatives have been the result of lengthy consultations which looked at strategies to enhance supply of qualified teachers and to sustain capability.[51]

b. New Zealand

New Zealand currently does not have an advanced workforce of experienced adult literacy specialists,[52] and certification is seen as a crucial part of the ongoing efforts to build the delivery capacity of the system.[53] In 2006, for the first time, a specifically funded professional development framework addressing the needs of the entire adult education sector has been put in place. It is designed to build Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector capacity through a focused and resourced approach to professional development.

At the moment, New Zealand's most community-based programs rely heavily on volunteers, and the need for full-time professional staff has been recognized.[54] Despite the increasing amounts of time and money going into the training of volunteers, retention of both volunteer and paid staff remains difficult due to low pay and status.[55] Tutor training programs for literacy tutors and workplace tutors have recently been accredited

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    * Centre for Excellence in Leadership

[49] Department for Education and Skills (UK), ―Further Education National Training Organization Subject Specifications – Foreword."

[50] Department of Education and Skills, United Kingdom, ―Read.Write.Plus" 2003 http://www.DfES.gov.uk/readwriteplus (August 2006)

[51] Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, *Building sustainable adult literacy provision*

[52] Alice Johnson Cain and John Benseman, *Adult literacy in New Zealand*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ., 2005, p.20.

[53] Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, *Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs – Support document* 2004, p.29

[54] ibid.

[55] Alice Johnson Cain and John Benseman, *Adult literacy in New Zealand*, p.21.

with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Standards for adult literacy practitioners are also being developed by the same institution.[56]

The government's latest initiatives aim to strengthen adult literacy through quality assurance, a new funding framework and professional development for the sector. The *Professional Development Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2010*, published by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) at the beginning of April 2006, provides a policy for professional development that acknowledges and builds on existing skills within the literacy sector. The strategy identifies four main approaches to professional development and contains an action plan prioritizing activities.

The four main approaches identified are[57]

1. Development of a sector-led working group that oversees, coordinates and monitors the implementation of the strategy.
2. Formation of a core group of people to take a linking role in the sector.
3. Identification of ACE skills and competencies requiring professional development.
4. Building on ACE Networks and conferences.

The establishment of an ACE professional development working group with members from the involved ACE sector including adult literacy, ACE Networks and the TEC constitute an important step towards implementing the strategy. This group will implement the immediate steps for professional development identified in the strategy, and design the ACE sector-led co-coordinating mechanism that will be responsible for leading and implementing the ACE Professional Development Strategy and Action Plan in the future.[58]

The strategy has been developed through sector surveys, workshops, information from other relevant sectors and countries, submissions on draft strategies and the findings of a think tank of ACE experts and TEC advisors. According to TEC, the process has been transparent, and there has been a high level of sector interest and engagement.[59] TEC's vision is about ―success, performance and shared good practice across the ACE sector through ACE professional development.‖[60] In five years time professional development is expected to be integrated into ACE practice at all levels.

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[56] Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, *Building sustainable adult literacy provision*
[57] Tertiary Education Commission (New Zealand), ―ACE Professional Development Strategy and Action Plan 2006–2010" March 2006 http://www.tec.govt.nz/downloads/a2z_publications/ace-prof-strategy-march06.pdf (August 2006)
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

c. United States of America (USA)

Ever since the passage of the *Adult Education Act* in 1964, the professional development of adult education instructors has been deemed as crucial for the success of adult education programs in the US. Professionalization of practitioners has come a long way since the federal government sponsored weeks-long summer institutes of the 1960s.[61] Starting with the 1970s, states were increasingly given more authority through various pieces of legislation to determine how professional development funds were used, signifying a shift from federal to state control of professional development[62]

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing movement from both policy makers and practitioners to professionalize the field of adult education including adult literacy, and create standards and certifications for practitioners. According to Sabatini et al., many factors have converged over the past decade to steadily accelerate the drive for professionalization in the field of adult literacy.[63] It is widely agreed that the U.S. Department of Education's development of a National Reporting System (NRS) and the accountability requirements contained in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 have reinforced the professionalization trend. Calls for evidence-based instruction, planning and program outcomes in literacy and adult basic education are appearing in the US literature.[64]

In a number of states, professional development support and infrastructures have become well established, and efforts to codify these efforts in systems of certification are under way.[65] Professional development systems for adult educators vary from state to state in areas such as delivery formats, state contributions, training requirements, and evaluation methods.

According to National Institute for Literacy's (NIFL) survey of state professional development systems, 22 states require instructors to be certified in K-12, secondary, or adult education.[66] Fifteen states use sets of instructor competencies. The NIFL survey has also determined that certification is generally required of only full- and part-time instructors, although five states have indicated that they also required volunteers to be certified. Fewer than twenty percent of the states require pre-service training of volunteers. The survey also showed that the decision to provide pre-service training to new staff, although encouraged by the states, is generally left up to local programs.

In addition to certification, instructor competencies are an important aspect of the professionalization of adult education and literacy in the US. The NIFL survey has

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[61] M. Tolbert, *Professional Development for Adult Education Instructors: State Policy Update* National Institute for Literacy, 2001.
[62] Ibid.
[63] John P. Sabatini et al, ―Professionalization and Certification for Teachers in Adult Basic Education‖ *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy* Vol: 3, February 2002.
[64] J.P. Comings, Establishing *an evidence-based adult education system*. NCSALL occasional paper, September 2003.
[65] John P. Sabatini et al, ―Professionalization and Certification for Teachers in Adult Basic Education‖
[66] M. Tolbert, *Professional Development for Adult Education Instructors: State Policy Update.*

showed that over one third of states have started using various frameworks for instructor competencies.[67] While both certification requirements and competencies are believed to promote participation in professional development, states also use other incentives to encourage instructors to participate in professional development activities. Incentives used in adult education include paid release time, reimbursement of travel expenses and workshop fees, and funds for substitutes to cover the instructors' classes.

According to the NIFL survey, states encourage but do not require local programs to evaluate the knowledge and skills gained by instructors from professional development activities. One-third of the states also report that adult learner achievement is used to determine the impact of professional development on instructors. Another method used by several states is peer review.[68] Seen as cost-effective, evaluating the effects of professional development is considered to promote continuous program improvement and to ensure program accountability.

Over the years, the federal funding share of adult literacy has declined and the share of matching funding by states and local education agencies has increased. Although the federal funding requirement (attached to federal funds) for professional development has decreased (From a *minimum* of 15 percent to a *maximum* of 12.5 percent) with the introduction of the WIA, only ten states do not provide funding for professional development in addition to the federal contribution.[69]

Clearly, current levels of professionalization vary greatly from state to state. With the ultimate goal of improving adult learner achievement, states and researchers are exploring new ways to improve professionalism of practitioners and the quality of instruction in programs. With pressure from the federally legislated accountability framework and the development of the NRS over the past decade, there has been acceleration in the drive for professionalization on the part of both policy makers and practitioners.

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

4. Other Professions: Are There Lessons for Adult Literacy?

As Ontario's Ministry of Education ponders the value of a new form of assessment for beginning teachers in the process of entering the profession, and explores various policy models, adult literacy policy stakeholders are presented with an opportunity to consider the implications of such policy models on the professionalization of literacy practitioners. With that opportunity in mind, this section will first attempt to provide a descriptive account of K-12 reform in Ontario without analyzing the political process and potential controversies around it. It will then provide in a brief section the same type of insight into the professionalization that has been taking place in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL). Finally, various aspects of professionalization in some other professions, including midwifery, are highlighted.

a. K-12

In the late 1990s and the early years of the 21st century, Ontario's K-12 education policies went through a major transformation, impacting amongst other areas, curriculum, program structure, accountability, governance, funding, teacher professionalism and working conditions. Notwithstanding differences in political ideologies of the governments in power during this period, the transformation of education policy in the province has been remarkably consistent in direction in all but a few areas. These governments, including the NDP government (1990-95), initiated and supported policies that have led to increased accountability through curriculum, assessment and reporting of student progress, provincial testing of student performance, and regulation of teacher professionalism.[70] It is in this context of reform that how best to prepare teachers for teaching, and how best to ensure they are qualified for and ready to perform their role, became essential questions.

A comprehensive review of K-12 education in Ontario began in mid-1993. This Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL) was the first overall review of education since the Hope Commission in 1950. RCOL toured Ontario inviting and receiving written and oral submissions from various interest groups, and carried out its own synthesis research, as well. A final report was released in early 1995.

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[70] Stephen E. Anderson and Sonia Ben Jaafar, ―Policy Trends in Ontario Education 1990-2003" Working Paper, Sub-Project 2 of *The Evolution of Teaching Personnel in Canada,* SSHRC Major Collaborative Research Initiatives Project 2002-2006, September 2003.

RCOL envisioned the establishment of an accountable education system in Ontario through a threefold strategy:[71]

1. The creation of an Ontario College of Teachers to be responsible for professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs.
2. Mandatory professional development and recertification of teachers on a five year cycle.
3. Establishment of an independent accountability agency to develop, manage, and publish results of the provincial assessments.

Clearly, the professionalization and continuing professional development of teachers were seen as one of the key building blocks of an enhanced accountability framework. The RCOL's recommendations anticipated many policy changes that were to occur during the remainder of the 1990s.

In June 1995, the Harris government came to power under the ideological banner of *The Common Sense Revolution*. A brief document bearing that title outlined the philosophy and directions of the Conservative party's political agenda for the province. It endorsed several of the education policy initiatives already undertaken or proposed by the NDP, including the introduction of an enhanced accountability framework. Government committees charged with developing plans for an Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) continued to function.

EQAO came into being in 1996 as an independent arm's-length agency of the Ontario Government after the RCOL recommended the establishment of province-wide testing to evaluate and report on the quality of education in Ontario schools. Over the past decade, its assessment practices and processes have placed it at the forefront of large-scale assessment programs world-wide. EQAO administers several province-wide tests. Results of these assessments yield individual, school, school board and provincial data on student achievement.

The EQAO's mandate is to ensure greater accountability and better quality in Ontario's publicly funded school system. It is responsible for:

- providing parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement
- making recommendations for improvement that educators, parents, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to improve learning and teaching
- developing and administering tests to evaluate the achievement of Ontario elementary and secondary school students.

The EQAO has developed an information system and data base called the Educational Quality Indicators Program. This information system assembles and provides school, school district, and provincial level data on a wide variety of demographic indicators

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[71] Stephen E. Anderson and Sonia Ben Jaafar, ―Policy Trends in Ontario Education 1990-2003"

drawn from Ministry sources, Statistics Canada, and surveys administered to pupils, teachers, and parents along with provincial tests.

The OCT was established in 1997[72] to allow teachers to regulate and govern their own profession in the public interest. Teachers who want to work in publicly funded schools in Ontario must be certified to teach in the province and be members of the College.

The College:[73]

- ensures Ontario students are taught by skilled teachers who adhere to clear standards of practice and conduct
- establishes standards of practice and conduct
- issues teaching certificates and may suspend or revoke them
- accredits teacher education programs and courses and
- provides for ongoing professional learning opportunities for members.

In its early years, two significant policy actions emerged from the College:[74]

Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The Ethical Standards recodified existing regulations for professional ethics and conduct from the Education Act, the Teaching Professions Act, and other policies, and became the basis for judging allegations of professional misconduct under the College's discipline process. The Standards of Practice were entirely new, and represented the first time in Ontario policy history that any attempt had been made to specify in operational terms a multi-dimensional vision of teachers' professional knowledge and practice.

The Standards of Practice policy identifies teacher competency standards in five broad domains:

1. commitment to pupils and pupil learning
2. professional knowledge
3. teaching practice
4. leadership and community
5. ongoing professional learning.

Within each domain, a set of standards and indicators associated with those standards are specified. Recent legislation requiring mandatory professional development for recertification and a more standardized teacher appraisal system across the province

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[72] OCT was established through Bill 31: Ontario College of Teachers (June 1996). This legislation formally authorized the creation of a self-regulatory professional agency for certified elementary and secondary school teachers.

[73] Stephen E. Anderson and Sonia Ben Jaafar, ―Policy Trends in Ontario Education 1990-2003"

[74] These two subsections are based upon a brief summary of the sections of Stephen E. Anderson and Sonia Ben Jaafar, ―Policy Trends in Ontario Education 1990-2003"

draws on the standards as a provincial policy tool for influencing the quality of teachers and teaching.

Accreditation process for faculties of education

The second major policy action undertaken by OCT was to develop and implement the province's first accreditation process for Ontario's all ten faculties of education between 1997 and 2000. The faculty programs were accredited initially for a period of three years. In the second round, re-accreditation will be granted on a seven year cycle. All of the faculties successfully passed the initial accreditation process. Two faculties, however, had to respond to requests for revisions prior to final approval.

Other areas of responsibility under OCT's mandate included teacher certification, re-certification and ongoing professional education. Ultimately, the College's inability to make progress on these fronts led the government to supersede the College's authority and to legislate changes in the initial and continuing certification processes through *Education Quality Improvement Act*, *Stability and Excellence in Education Act* and *Quality in the Classroom Act* which all had crucial implications for professionalization.[75]

There are essentially two contending models prescribing how best to prepare teachers for teaching: these might be termed as the *professionalization* model, and the *accountability* model.[76] In the professionalization model:[77]

> [p]racticing teachers, organized collectively as a profession with an enforceable code of conduct and observable standards of practice, control entry into their own ranks, assisted by the university-based faculties of education who provide suitably-designed and approved degree programs. The appropriate level of government authorizes and legitimizes the arrangement through a legal framework that recognizes the autonomous existence of the teaching profession.

With the establishment of the OCT as a professional regulatory body, Ontario seemed well on its way to institutionalizing the professionalization model of teacher accreditation and assessment. A mandatory accreditation program, not of individual teacher candidates, but of the teacher education programs housed in various universities around the province, was the clearest indicator of this model.[78]

Although the Conservative Government initially went along with the idea for a provincial College of Teachers which had been a major recommendation of RCOL in 1994, and had

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[75] Bill 160, Education Quality Improvement Act (December 1997), Bill 80, Stability and Excellence in Education Act (June 2001), and Bill 110, Quality in the Classroom Act (December 2001).

[76] A.R. Roth, ―Standards for certification, licensure and accreditation" *Handbook of research on teacher education: A project of the Association of Teacher Educators*. New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1996 (Quoted in Larry A. Glassford, ―A Triumph of Politics over Pedagogy? The Case of the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test, 2000-2005" *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue: 45, November, 2005.)

[77] Larry A. Glassford, ―A Triumph of Politics over Pedagogy? The Case of the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test, 2000-2005"

[78] Ibid.

been approved by the outgoing government led by Bob Rae, it later changed its course toward the alternative *accountability* model.[79] The first action of the Conservatives in that direction was to announce a framework for a comprehensive Ontario Teacher Testing Program. By the Fall of 2001, legislation was introduced to establish a new qualifying test to ensure that those who want to teach in Ontario have the necessary skills and knowledge required before they become certified.[80]

The new test was to be phased in beginning in the spring of 2002, and become a real part of teacher certification in 2003-2004. With the change in government, however, and in the absence of a firm consensus between the Ministry of Education, the Ontario Association of Deans of Education, and the College of Teachers on a new format for testing, the plug was pulled on the test in late 2004.[81] The test is yet to be replaced by an alternative assessment mechanism.

b. TESL and Other Professions[82]

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) is a field in the process of professionalization. Some of the issues facing the professionalization of TESL are particularly relevant to the debate on professionalization in adult literacy in Ontario:[83]

> Professional guidelines need to be established through fair processes with grassroots' participation to help negotiate [the] competing demands in the best interest of [TESL] stakeholders, and in particular of [TESL] students... The challenge is to raise the bar, but slowly enough and with sufficient supports to assist all [the] diverse practitioners struggling to cross it.

In Canada, most adult ESL teachers are organized loosely under the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Canada umbrella, with member organizations from nine provinces (not Quebec) and the Yukon. ESL teachers in the K-12 system are organized under their provincial associations or unions, but often have membership in a TESL Canada affiliate as well.

One provincial association, TESL Manitoba, is a member of the provincial K-S4 (K-12) teachers' union. Accordingly, TEAM (Teaching English to Adults of Manitoba) emerged to serve the specific needs of adult-ESL teachers and learners outside the K-S4 (K-12)

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[79] Ibid.

[80] The Quality in the Classroom Act was passed in December 2001. The Act required beginning teachers to successfully pass a standardized Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test in addition to their pre-service teacher education program as a condition of certification. Over 97% of teacher candidates passed the first (2003) Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test.

[81] Larry A. Glassford, ―A Triumph of Politics over Pedagogy? The Case of the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test, 2000-2005"

[82] This section relies heavily (including entire sub-sections) upon Seonaigh MacPherson et al, ―Profits or Professionalism: Issues Facing the Professionalization of TESL in Canada" *College Quarterly* Vol: 8 No: 2, Spring 2005.

[83] Seonaigh MacPherson et al, ―Profits or Professionalism: Issues Facing the Professionalization of TESL in Canada"

public jurisdiction. Ontario (TESL Ontario) has twelve affiliates across the province serving as various urban or regional branches of their provincial organization, while Alberta (ATESL) has two, one in each of Edmonton and Calgary. TESL Canada, in turn, is a member of TESOL, which is an American and emerging international professional body. TESL Canada defines itself as ―the national federation of English as a Second Language teachers, learners and learner advocates."[84]

One of the targets of TESL Advocacy are ESL teachers, whose issues might include job security, salaries and benefits, and parity with professionals with comparable skills, education, and background. As a strongly female-dominated profession, TESL's discrimination as a profession can be considered as part of a broader problem with gender discrimination in pay and in the workplace.[85] Particularly vulnerable are those teachers who work in community-based ESL programs that are neither publicly-funded nor unionized.[86]

Code of Conduct

Drawing on various pre-existing ethical codes in the fields of TESL and Education, TESL Canada recently adopted a series of ethical guidelines for ESL professionals and their members vis-à-vis their relationships with students, colleagues, and the professional association. At present, however, neither TESL Canada's code of conduct nor its standards are enforceable with meaningful sanctions. For example, the organization lacks the legal or political authority to invoke sanctions on those practicing TESL without proper qualification, or those who engage in professional misconduct. In contrast, teachers in the public K-12 school systems in Canada are responsible to professional organizations such as the Colleges of Teachers and to duly elected school boards.[87]

Professional Standards

Recently, TESL Canada has launched a national initiative to offer standardized TESL certificates to teachers of adult ESL, and a parallel accreditation initiative to recognize qualified TESL pre-professional education required for such certification. Some provincial TESL organizations have their own standards. For example, TESL Ontario, ATESL (Alberta), and BCTEAL (British Columbia) all developed provincial certification standards, which have since been dropped by BCTEAL in favour of the national certification standards. In contrast, ATESL and TESL Ontario's certification standards persist and are even more stringent than TESL Canada's.[88]

In TESL Canada, certification is the term generally used to refer to the process whereby an ESL teacher is recognized as a TESL professional; accreditation is a term used to refer

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[84] Seonaigh MacPherson et al, ―Profits or Professionalism: Issues Facing the Professionalization of TESL in Canada"
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

to the process whereby a TESL professional education program is recognized to qualify students for subsequent certification. Both certification and accreditation standards focus on adult ESL because K-12 ESL programs are a provincial jurisdiction in Canada. In the K-12 system, TESL Canada certification is, by and large, insufficient; although the TESL specialist requirements vary and may be less than that of the adult sector, all pre-service K-12 teachers have to be certified according to their provincial guidelines at their level (primary, elementary, middle years, or secondary), which involve 8 months to 4 years of professional education.

TESL Canada established standards for four levels of professional adult ESL teaching credentials (www.tesl.ca). At the time of writing, the first three levels are differentiated by the amount of experience rather than education; only the Level IV certification asks for additional education (graduate degree in TESL or related field). These standards and procedures are under review, and may change significantly in the coming months. At present, the guidelines are established for a basic TESL certificate, which requires a university degree with at least 100 hours of formal in-class instruction and participation and a 20-hour practicum. For Level II, teachers require an additional two years of full-time, supervised teaching. These requirements have met with some resistance and bureaucratic challenges, but it is opening the way for greater mobility for teachers, greater standardization in teacher preparedness, and strengthening the salary and status potential of the profession overall.

TESL Program Accreditation Standards

In Canada, both private and public institutions offer TESL professional education, certificates, and diplomas that can be accredited by TESL Canada. The duration of the programs vary considerably, and the prerequisites can range from high school diplomas with minimal TOEFL scores to university degrees with high standing and demonstrated native-speaker competency in English. Except for non-native English-speaking teachers of ESL, pre-professional programs do not require second language competency, despite the fact that Lange[89] long ago identified this as the key requirement for developing reflective, responsible teachers. Public TESL programs can be found in community colleges or universities. In the case of universities, programs are offered in professional faculties (e.g., Education and Applied Linguistics), but also commonly in non-academic programs offered through Faculties of Extension or Continuing Education.

Unlike the USA where TESL tends to be located outside of Education in Departments of Linguistics or English, or in non-academic EFL programs, in Canada TESL programs are frequently situated in Faculties of Education. This has been a positive trend in Canada because, as Lange suggests, TESL education needs to include studies of non-linguistic contents such as curriculum theory, development, and implementation; pedagogical theories and practices; adult education; and evaluation and assessment. These offer teachers important knowledge on the practice, not just the theory, of their profession. In university Faculty of Education programs, though TESL certification programs often overlap with pre-service K-12 programs, they tend not to be encapsulated within them

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[89] Ibid.

because of the high demand for adult ESL instructors. In Canada, distinctions between K-12 and adult ESL educational sectors are exaggerated by differences in governmental jurisdictions and certification requirements. These differences have generated, and continue to generate, heated debate about the best institutions or sites (academic or non-academic) to be entrusted with providing pre-service and in-service professional TESL education.[90]

In Canada, standards for certifying TESL professionals are inextricably bound up with the standards for accrediting TESL professional education. The process of accrediting TESL professional education programs requires close negotiations and networking with public and private educational institutions. TESL professional programs can be found in both private and public institutions, and with respect to the latter, in both extension (non-credit) and academic (for-credit, degree- or diploma-granting) programs. Many professional programs go well beyond TESL Canada's minimum requirement of 100 hours (about 4-6 weeks) of in-class with a 20-hour practicum.

Conflicts persist between, on the one hand, universities and colleges that offer extended professional programs with academic credits, diplomas, and degrees, and, on the other hand, programs that only meet TESL Canada's minimal 4-6 week requirement with short, often for-profit programs.[91] Some universities and colleges feel this discourages the professionalization of the field, since it does not offer sufficient rewards for more prolonged studies, except at the graduate level. So, it is not surprising to find that some of the major university TESL certificate, diploma, and M.Ed. programs, for example, have yet to apply for TESL Canada accreditation, leaving their graduates in limbo in their applications for TESL Canada certification. Insofar as increasing numbers of employers are demanding such certification, the issue is in need of immediate attention.

Other Professions

Most professions rely upon a combination of education, experience, and formal assessments in their licensing/certification requirements. However, these assessments vary in terms of the amount and type of education and experience, the timing and type of the assessment, and the extent to which each component of the licensing process determines if the candidate is considered capable to practice.

Like teaching, the minimum that most professions require for certification is graduation from an accredited professional program. Generally speaking, most professions rely on additional requirements, beyond initial professional training for certification or licensure purposes. In some cases, successful completion of professional training followed by a defined period of internship, clinical practice or some other form of on-the-job experience is sufficient for initial certification or licensure.[92]

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Examples include midwifery and architecture in Ontario; College of Midwives of Ontario, *Becoming registered* 2005, http://www.cmo.on.ca (August 2006), and Ontario Association of Architects, *Licensing and Practice Information* 2005, http://www.oaa.on.ca (August 2006)

Many professions also rely upon formal tests to award initial certificates or licenses to practice for candidates who have met the standards for effective and safe job performance. Licensure tests tend to be paper-and-pencil tasks that require the completion of multiple choice, selected response or short answer items and/or essay questions. Some tests are computerized and include computer simulations, and others include clinical setting assessments with oral interviews.

Certification or registration tests are developed and administered either by the profession itself, by a national professional association, or group of regulatory bodies. Entry to-the-profession tests tend to assess professional competencies, including general skills and knowledge.[93] Tests administered to doctors, lawyers, social workers, doctors, nurses and others in the medical profession include questions on ethics and the law as they relate to professional responsibilities. The content of these tests usually reflects standards of practice determined by the profession itself.[94]

While paper-and-pencil standardized tests are the most typical type of entry-to the profession assessment, it is important to recognize that they are only one part of the overall quality assurance system that most professions have developed to ensure that practitioners meet professional standards of competence. High standards are also maintained within different professions through the official accreditation of professional preparation programs to ensure that high-quality instruction is provided within them, as well as opportunities for professional practice under expert guidance.

Certification procedures are closely tied to these quality control tools, and typically take place over a multi-stage process. Lawyers and doctors rely upon a multi-stage, multicomponent assessment process to fully certify or register members. For example, the Law Society of Upper Canada has recently approved a new licensing process, which includes attendance at a five-week skills and professional responsibility program. This program requires the completion of assignments and written assessments, two licensing examinations (a barrister examination and a solicitor examination), and an articling term of ten months.[95]

Medical graduates in Ontario also go through two stages of registration to practice medicine in the province. First, they obtain a certificate of registration authorizing Postgraduate Education, and once they complete the next certification stage, they obtain a

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[93] Examples include Certified General Accountants and architects in Ontario; Certified General Accountants of Ontario, *The CGA program at a glance* 2005, http://www.cga-ontario.org/newfiles/becoming04/program/program.htm (August 2006), and Ontario Association of Architects, *Licensing and Practice Information*

[94] Examples include College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and Law Society of Upper Canada; College of Physicians and Surgeons in Ontario, *Registration process* 2005 http://www.cpso.on.ca/Info_physicians/applicants/regist.htm (August 2006), and Law Society of Upper Canada, ―Design for Licensing Process Approved‖ 2005, http://www.lsuc.on.ca/news/conv/conv_feb05.jsp (August 2006)

[95] Law Society of Upper Canada, ―Design for Licensing Process Approved‖ 2005, http://www.lsuc.on.ca/news/conv/conv_feb05.jsp (August 2006)

certificate of registration authorizing Independent Practice. The requirements for the latter certificate include a medical degree from an accredited medical school, successful completion of the two-part qualifying examination, certification by examination by one of the professional colleges, completion of one year of postgraduate training or active medical practice, or full clinical clerkship at an accredited Canadian medical school.[96]

A few professions allow unlicensed or uncertified individuals to work, although there are limits on the type of work in which they are allowed to engage. In some jurisdictions, new practitioners who have completed their education, but have not yet completed their certification examinations, can receive temporary licenses to practice (e.g. nurses, physical therapists in the US).[97] This opportunity also occurs within teaching, especially in areas where there are shortages of certified teachers, and uncertified teachers are able to teach for specified periods of time, in specific schools (e.g. private schools) and under certain circumstances (e.g. US and Japan).

As well, some professions have alternative routes to certification. Some accept experience in place of education requirements, and others accept alternative combinations of education and experience in place of formal professional degrees or diplomas.[98] These options are similar to some of the alternative teaching certification programs that have been developed in the US, including Troops to Teachers and Teach for America.[99]

Lessons from Midwifery?[100]

In 1991, Ontario became the first province in Canada to legislate midwifery as a self-regulating healthcare profession following more than ten years of intense lobbying by midwives, consumers, and other supporters. This legislation granted midwifery a new legitimacy as part of the province's publicly-funded healthcare system and opened the doors for midwifery to become an accessible form of care for women throughout Ontario.

For supporters of the midwifery model of care, this ground-breaking legislation represented a pivotal achievement in the struggle to make the benefits of midwifery more widely available and to give midwifery credibility as a legitimate healthcare option. However, the passing of the legislation also generated new challenges and tensions for the evolving midwifery community in Ontario: by establishing midwifery as a self-regulated healthcare profession subject to the same regulatory framework as the province's other healthcare professions, the 1991 Midwifery Act formalized and standardized midwifery in ways that contrast pre-legislative representations of midwifery as a diverse, informal, grassroots, and inherently alternative mode of healthcare.

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[96] College of Physicians and Surgeons in Ontario, *Registration process*

[97] Marianne Larsen et al., ―Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

[98] Certified General Accountants of Ontario, *The CGA program at a glance,* and Ontario Association of Architects, *Licensing and Practice Information*

[99] Quoted in Marianne Larsen et al., ―Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"

[100] This section draws upon: P. Spoel, *The textual formation of a healthcare profession: a rhetorical analysis of the regulatory documents governing Ontario's midwifery profession,* SSHRC Standard Research Grant Application, Fall 2001 http://midwifery.laurentian.ca/sshrc-proposal.2001.pdf (August 2006).

Although the ―new midwifery‖ retains strong associations with these pre-legislative roots, in the post-legislative context the profession of midwifery has inevitably redefined itself to more closely resemble established, mainstream healthcare professions. This basic tension, noted by a number of scholars and practitioners of midwifery, has yet to be explored specifically in terms of the rhetorical motives, structures, and effects of the set of regulatory texts engendered by the 1991 legislation. This set of texts warrants rhetorical analysis because, we argue, it constitutes a crucial ingredient in the formation of Ontario‘s new midwifery profession.

5. Professionalization and Performance Accountability

In the 1990s, the OPS was re-engineered through an approach characterized by the application of business principles and practices to the public sector. This transformation of the public sector initially began in the US and the UK, especially under Reagan and Thatcher. In the 1990s, it started making a worldwide impact, including a particularly strong one in Ontario. With this transformation, the OPS have undergone significant changes in terms of its objectives, norms, structures, roles, and service recipients. Today, the change in the landscape of public service in Ontario has indeed been fundamental. The magnitude of change has been so substantial that a ‗reversal' is not only practically unfeasible but also politically inconceivable.[101]

Predictably, there have been profound repercussions for education policies including adult literacy policy. As indicated in the second section of the paper, amongst the factors which warrant our attention toward professionalization in adult literacy practice in Ontario today, the growing impact of accountability is the most consequential. It encompasses all other factors addressed in this paper.

Norman Rowen, in an important discussion paper written in collaboration with the 1998 OLC taskforce on Literacy Worker Recognition, has recognized the following major benefits from increased professionalism in adult literacy practice:[102]

- *Increased recognition of the value of literacy activity, which is sometimes referred to as raising the status of the profession, helps the public appreciate what good practitioners do.* This benefit should be conceptualized as part of *capacity building* in the field of adult literacy which is dealt with later in this section.

- *An agreed set of standards helps to convey to new and existing practitioners, to the programs which employ literacy practitioners, to agencies and governments, and to learners and potential learners, the expectations which the field as a whole has for those working in literacy programs.* Rowen's line of thinking here is based on the assumption that there is a clear public interest that can be safeguarded through quality assurance. In that sense, standards of practice immediately become an issue of public accountability.

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[101] The authors of an governmental report acknowledge that by 2010 they may look back on the transformation the OPS went through in the late 1990s and the first few years of the new Millennium ―…as just the prelude to even greater change. ―Ontario Public Service Restructuring Secretariat, Cabinet Office, *Transforming Public Service for the 21st Century* (Toronto: Ontario Cabinet Office, April 2000).

[102] Norman Rowen in collaboration with OLC Task Force on Literacy Worker Recognition, ―Another Step Forward" Discussion Paper on Recognition for Adult Literacy Practitioners, The OLC, August 1998. The paper suggests that it is in the public interest, the interest of the practitioners and programs, and of learners, to move toward certification. However, the paper also discusses some of the reasons why certification, in and of itself, is not likely to raise wages or improve working conditions.

- *The standards can serve as a focus for professional development, which, in turn, can demonstrate the field's commitment to increasing the quality of literacy practitioners and, by implication, of literacy practice or programs.* With growing *parallel evidence*[103] from research in non-adult education and the broader field of adult education, Rowen's reasoning directly links with the issue of performance (and thus return on investment of public funds), and thus, accountability.

- *Programs and funders may demonstrate increased accountability based on the quality of programs resulting from the implementation of practitioner standards.* Here, Rowen points out what might be one of the attractions of professionalization in adult literacy particularly but not exclusively from the perspective of policy makers (increased accountability).

Under Ontario's new public accountability framework, performance in publicly funded service delivery is monitored and subjected to quality control and assurance. The idea of audit has been exported from its original financial context to cover ever more detailed scrutiny of non-financial processes and systems. Performance indicators are being used to measure adequate and inadequate performance with supposed precision. As one observer put it, ―…[w]e are supposedly on the high road towards ever more perfect accountability."[104] A clear indication is proliferation of performance accountability frameworks across Ontario's Ministries, including MTCU which runs Ontario's LBS Program.

The following section will address some issues that are at the heart of the debate on accountability today, highlighting some of the conceptual links to the topic of professionalization. A detailed account of performance accountability in Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Program will follow. The assumption here is that the trend toward performance accountability necessitates a better understanding of the implications for professionalization.

a. Reciprocity of Accountability

> ―All accountability relationships are necessarily reciprocal - unfortunately, often only implicitly. My authority to require you to do something you might not otherwise do depends on my capacity to create the opportunity for you to learn how to do it, and to educate me on the process of learning how to do it, so that I become better at enabling you to do it the next time."[105]

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[103] Marianne Larsen et al., ―Professional Certification and Entry-to-practice Assessments"
[104] Onora O'Neill, ―Called to Account" BBC 4 - Reith Lectures, 2002.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2002/lecturer.shtml
[105] Richard F. Elmore, *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*. The Albert Shanker Institute. (Washington D.C., 2000). This is a crucial piece of reading on the topic of reciprocity of accountability.

As stated above, there can be no demands for accountability without attention to the capacity that exists to deliver them. For every increment of performance government agencies demand from service providers, they have an equal responsibility to provide the literacy field with the capacity, including professional development, to meet that expectation.

In accordance with the reciprocity principle, in an accountability framework where an emphasis on practitioner assessment and evaluation is balanced with an emphasis on professionalization of practitioners, the optimal outcomes are achievable by all key policy stakeholders, policy makers, practitioners, and of course, learners.

Some of the defining characteristics of a professionalization-oriented accountability system are

- continuous discussion and feedback on performance improvement
- the development of a rapport with the evaluator
- multiple methods of understanding practitioner quality and progress[106]
- Active encouragement of practitioners toward engaging in reflective practice and _learning how to learn‘
- Adult literacy practice that is informed by theory and research
- Trustworthiness: valid, reliable, and comparable methods of practitioner evaluation
- Feasibility: practical, cost-effective, and realistic methods of practitioner evaluation.

A _highly performing‘ performance accountability system needs to be based on a principle of continuous learning. Continuous learning is reached by means of a feedback loop in order to improve performance.

A distinction needs to be made between the improvements that can be made in the short term and the long term. In the case of short term improvements, one can speak of *movements*. This means that if you just keep adding more of a certain variable, e.g. the work hours of practitioners, you will initially see some improvements in performance. But eventually, a situation will be reached in which performance improvements start tapering off. At some point, practitioners will start getting overworked and burning out. In economics circles, this is known as the *law of diminishing returns*.

To achieve performance improvements in the long term, one needs to look to *shifts* in the overall performance. Instead of only reaching incremental improvements as discussed above under *movements*, to make improvements of substantial magnitude, the focus needs to be on actual, substantial *shifts* in performance. This is where the point about *capacity building* comes into the picture.

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[106] According to Sabatini et al., in the US adult education accountability processes frequently count the existence of ongoing professional development as an indicator of quality; John P. Sabatini et al, ―Professionalization and Certification for Teachers in Adult Basic Education"

In other words, measurement of performance per se, does not amount to a ―high performance" performance accountability system. The emphasis needs to be placed on the *management* of that performance through capacity building, rather than on the measurement of it.[107]

Effective and efficient dissemination of knowledge in the field of adult literacy is a crucial aspect of continuous improvement in the long term. This is indeed a strong point of professionalization. In professions from medicine to law, as well as in K-12, one of the most crucial benefits of professionalization has been the creation of a variety of effective and efficient mechanisms of knowledge dissemination.

A change in the focus of Ontario‗s adult literacy policy toward capacity building will necessarily involve all parties of the performance accountability framework. It will be necessary for provincial policy makers to engage in dedicated efforts toward supporting the programs and investing in all aspects of agencies‗ capacity, including research and professional development. Such a strategy is the *quid pro quo* of continuous improvement that is sustainable in the long term.

Another way to state this point is to say that the exercise of legitimate authority requires reciprocity of accountability:[108] If the formal authority of an individual‗s role requires that he/she hold others accountable for some action or outcome, then that individual has an equal and complementary responsibility to assure that those others have the capacity to do what is asked of them.[109]

A strong case for building the accountability framework in the adult literacy field based on professionalization and the principle of reciprocity can be made when we take into account performance improvement in the longer run, and acknowledge capacity building on the part of adult literacy policy makers as a vital component of accountability. In addition to performance improvement in the longer run, there are various aspects of professionalization that, at least theoretically, will appeal to adult literacy policy makers. They are:

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[107] Clearly there is more to getting results than simply implementing a performance measurement system: In the US, Governmental Accounting Standards Board examined the development of performance measurement systems in 489 U.S. state and local government agencies. Only a minority of agencies reported that performance measures were effective in improving responsiveness to customers, service quality, cross-agency coordination, communication with the public and elected officials, or cost savings. Melkers, Julia K. et al. ―Performance Measures at the State and Local Levels: A Summary of Survey Results," Governmental Accounting Standards Board, November 2002.

[108] Richard F. Elmore‗s (Professor, Graduate School of Education Harvard University and Senior Research Fellow, Consortium for Policy Research in Education) principle of reciprocity, which he developed within the context of his discussion of accountability in the US educational system, may logically be applied to all accountability relationships.

[109] Richard F. Elmore, ―Accountability in Local School Districts: Learning to do the Right Things.*"* in *Improving Educational Performance: Local and Systemic Reforms* ed. by *P.* W. Thurston and J. G. Ward. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press, Inc. 5: 59-82, 1997.

- mechanisms of regulation for the quality of individuals selected and permitted to practice in place - ideally, by the field, for the field
- frameworks for the continuous improvement of the quality of teachers practicing within the profession
- providing practitioners with constructive feedback related to teaching knowledge, strategies, and skills by a professional body
- professional development that is encouraged and valued by practitioners
- recognizing and rewarding of teaching excellence carried out by a professional body.

These aspects of professionalization provide us with clues as to how policy makers might pursue multiple goals through supporting professionalization.

b. Capacity Building and Professionalization as Vital Components of Accountability

As pointed out above, there is a serious need to ensure that delivery agencies and practitioners possess the capacity to respond to existing and new demands for accountability within the field. In order to do their work, practitioners need resources, infrastructure, skills, knowledge, support and understanding.

The task of pushing institutional performance up is made harder by repeatedly redefined and ever more ambitious targets and newly introduced initiatives. In order to successfully attain new performance targets and adjust to new initiatives, practitioners and delivery agencies need support in the form of capacity building measures.

Two kinds of capacity - to perform and to be accountable - are clearly linked. Building the capacity to perform involves:

- increasing resources and focusing them on quality rather than quantity
- improving opportunities for professional development
- using performance data for continuous improvement.

Building the capacity to be accountable involves ensuring that:

- accountability demands are commensurate with resources and capacity
- practitioners are engaged in the development of measurement tools
- administrative staff training and support are provided.

This support can come in many different forms, including direct funding and support for a self-reflective approach to professionalization.

c. Performance Accountability in Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Program

The accountability framework for LBS consists of many components.[110] These include:

- The continuous improvement performance management system.
- The LBS Contract signed between delivery agencies and the MTCU. It is a multi-year contract that governs the relationship between the parties. It covers a period of three years.
- The Business Plan forms part of the Contract. The Business Plan (for delivery agencies) represents agencies' written commitment to provide services. It outlines agencies' goals based on community-demographic/labour market information and program statistics.
- The Audit Guidelines. They form part of the Contract.
- Annual evaluations.
- Program monitoring. The focus of the monitoring process is the ‗site visit' which is conducted by the LBS Field Consultants. There are two types of visits according to the monitoring guidelines – the program monitoring visit and the program support visit.
- The LBS Information Management System (IMS). It was developed to capture LBS program data electronically. It is the only statistical reporting tool used and agencies' administrative accountability is reflected in the timelines and accuracy of data transmission. A website[111] is available for all LBS agencies to access the LBS IMS system information.

Continuous Improvement Performance Management System

MTCU developed CIPMS[112] as a performance management system that takes a multi-year, continuous approach to service development and management. It is built on research into the principles and conceptual models of performance measurement in other countries. The system was first set up in 1999 to measure the results of the Job Connect program managed by third parties.

The CIPMS has been in place in the LBS Program since 2004-2005, as a response to the 2002 audit of the MTCU in the 2002 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. Various pieces of communication from the MTCU to the adult literacy field make clear references to CIPMS in the LBS Program.

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[110] Measures of performance accountability are addressed here; the overall accountability framework LBS consists of measures of procedural, substantive and performance accountability.

[111] http://lbsims.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/login.asp

[112] CIPMS (Job Connect Program) was profiled in an international Public Sector Quality Fair, and MTCU Employment Preparation staff received the Amethyst Award and the International Coaching Federation's Prism Award. It was also nominated by MTCU for a *Significant Innovation in Public Administration and Management* award at CAPAM (an international association of senior public sector practitioners), but did not make it to the finals. See: http://www.capam.org/awards/innovation/2002/entries.html

CIPMS within the context of the LBS Program is in its ‗beginnings' according to the MTCU. As this new system is still in its infancy stages, the literacy field has not received ‗training' on CIPMS. To date, it has not covered practitioner teaching standards or practitioner evaluation, components of professionalism in other professions.

The Ministry has been continually updating CIPMS throughout its programs since 1999. In 2004-05, it made some significant changes in the LBS Program accountability framework, and laid down the foundations of CIPMS within the context of this program.[113] The Ministry has made it clear that it intends to continuously strengthen its LBS accountability framework through CIPMS.

In the LBS Program, CIPMS has shifted the emphasis from the management of processes and activities to management of ‗results' or ‗outcomes.' The main idea behind this system is to focus on the ‗empowerment', as MTCU puts it, of the delivery system through benchmarking. The continuous improvement system is meant to reward innovation in the best performing organizations and to provide incentives to the lower-performing ones.

By adopting CIPMS, MTCU has taken on the mandate of continually improving adult literacy and basic skills delivery programs in the province; it is accountable for improvements in the ‗big picture,' and responsible for ‗shifting' Ontario's adult education performance curve. This continuous improvement system will also require reciprocity by the Ministry in simultaneously building the capacity of agencies to deliver. Ultimately, continuous improvement hinges on the availability of high quality professional development opportunities linked to research.

Performance Indicators and Measurements

Three core measures are used in benchmarking performance in LBS. These originated with CIPMS but are now also found in other LBS documents, such as the Business Plan. These include:

1. **Efficiency:** The process with which resources (funds, time, and expertise) are transformed into services and results.

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[113] After its initial launch within the context of LBS Program, some of the changes to the program's CIPMS were:
- A standardized rating system based on the requirements for the delivery of LBS.
- New requirements for program exit and follow-up. All LBS agencies are now required to report on the status of learners on exit. This includes providing a reason for every learner leaving the program. Agencies are also expected to have policies in place for attendance. Follow-up now requires that agencies contact learners who have achieved their goals.
- A Learner Satisfaction Survey: The survey represents an effort to better understand learner satisfaction with the program. All agencies are now required to use the survey with students who are exiting the program.

2. **Effectiveness:** The results of a program's activity (compared to its intended purpose) in terms of its specific contributions to the program objectives.

3. **Customer Satisfaction/ Learner Satisfaction:** The quality of service. This is a measurement of how well the services are delivered to clients. It is determined by the extent to which clients are satisfied.

As part of their contract with MTCU, delivery agencies conduct yearly program evaluations. The eighteen Core Quality Standards (CQS), outlined in the LBS Guidelines, are a key component of the accountability process. The CQS have been in place for several years and most agencies have a process or system in place for achieving them or making progress towards achieving them. The process involves defining the features of the standards, and identifying the evidence that shows the standards are met.

A process of internal agency evaluation is carried out by agency staff annually and usually involves consultations with LBS staff along with learners, various other stakeholders and especially, referring agencies. The results of this process are incorporated into the overall business plan for which the agency is accountable.

The program visits by the Ministry determine an agency's compliance with the Guidelines and the CQS, and identify best practices as well as areas that can be improved. This visiting process uses a standardized rating system: exemplary, meets requirements and does not meet requirements. MTCU's Field Consultants complete a report and forward their reports, including ratings, to agencies.

Agencies are required to use the Information Management System (IMS), to capture statistical data about program performance. The importance of this information is to show the progress of learners between levels of literacy proficiency.

Performance Funding

The LBS Program's CIPMS has redefined the relationship between government and its service providers through an outcomes-based performance funding. Given the advent of ‗value-for-money' direction in public governance globally, and Ontario's Auditor General's push in the same direction across the OPS provincially, it could be anticipated that the literacy field's experience with performance funding has only just started.

MTCU initiated the framework of performance funding within the context of LBS by negotiating annually with each service delivery agency to establish the number of contact hours to be provided. Contact hours represented the total amount of time that an agency planned to spend delivering literacy services to all of its clients. The Ministry-established funding ranges, within which each agency's approved funding allocation had to fall, were based on the negotiated level of contact hours. Thus, funding was based on the amount of services to be provided.

This performance funding formula based on contact hours was assessed to be inadequate in terms of accountability by the Auditor General in 2002.[114] In its annual report, the Auditor General's office indicated that MTCU needed to establish a specific link between funding levels and the quality and effectiveness of services in meeting client needs. It was also concluded that the funding formula based on contact hours was not sufficiently responsive to changes in activity levels, either in total or at individual agencies.

In 2004, in the follow-up to the 2002 report, the Auditor General's Office recommended that MTCU should implement a funding model that:

- sets out the conditions and process which will result in adjustments in funding
- recognizes whether delivery agencies have been successful in helping their clients achieve positive outcomes.

It should be expected that the current framework of performance funding is indeed just the prelude to even greater change in this direction. No doubt, such change will lead to an increase in the demand for practitioner performance. The need to ensure that they possess the capacity to respond to the increased demand will be essential.

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[114] In 2005 this title was changed from _'Provincial Auditor of Ontario' to _Auditor General'.

6. Professionalization and Substantive Accountability

Substantive accountability is about the _what' and _why' questions in adult literacy. What is adult literacy? What constitutes adult literacy skills? Why do we need adult literacy skills? What should literacy practitioners focus on in service delivery? Why does adult literacy incorporate certain topics and exclude others?

Certain aspects of Ontario's adult education policy choices related to the questions posed above can be analyzed using the analytical concept of substantive accountability. Should Ontario adopt exclusively an economic focused approach? Should such an approach be balanced with an emphasis upon active citizenship and the social agenda? These issues have crucial implications for professionalization.

With substantive accountability, competing values, worldviews and ideologies start to come into conflict with each other in the field of adult literacy. Since the answers to _what' and the _why' questions are not based on widely shared societal norms and values, or on well-established rules, regulations and laws, substantive accountability is not a straightforward matter.

An obvious issue here is the possibility for clashes between, for instance:

- a government's priorities on the one hand, and the priorities of practitioners on the other
- economic gains versus more diffuse social outcomes
- increase in employment numbers versus empowerment of learners
- decrease in the number of social assistance recipients versus increased independence.

Both the economic-focused and the active citizenship/social agenda approaches are portraying only partial representations of the reality, and that full reality is different from simply the sum of both approaches, as argued by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC): [115]

> The learning society incorporates a number of themes, including learning for work, economic sustainability, and the growth of human capital in this age of globalization and the knowledge economy. It also incorporates the development of knowledgeable citizens and the goal of learning for the creation of the civil society. It acknowledges our changed world of information and communication technologies, and the ways they impact on how we learn, what we learn, and what we value as knowledge, information and culture. And lastly, the learning society incorporates a vision of learning throughout the life span and learning that is integrated across all facets of living, broadening the concept of lifelong learning to life-wide learning.

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[115] CMEC, *Developing an Adult Education Policy Framework: Terminology, Typology and Best Practices* Toronto, 2005.

The emerging *learning society* in Ontario should indeed be one that acknowledges the need for and the value of learning throughout life, and to the extent that it is possible incorporate both the economic focused and the active citizenship/social agenda approaches to adult education and literacy. The translation of both of these approaches into public policy *fully* and *simultaneously*, however, is a rather utopian vision.

Amongst practitioners, such differences of vision have challenging consequences for professionalization, and are unlikely to be resolved in a simple fashion. A solution requires agreement on what is important to various stakeholders, and on what Ontarians as a society want out of adult literacy. If practitioners fail to agree upon substantive issues through a democratic process, it might fall to bureaucrats and auditors to determine the ends and objectives of the adult literacy field unilaterally.

Clues for an *asymmetrical* balance between the different visions which reflects the realities of and possibilities in Ontario's adult education policy context is to be found in Greg Sorbara's 2005 Ontario Budget Speech:[116]

> In today's knowledge economy, education is the prerequisite for prosperity. The brains and know-how of a skilled workforce are the economic edge of the 21st century. So, if we are to continue to compete with our neighbours to the South, and take on the rapidly growing economies of Brazil and Russia, India and China, we simply must equip ourselves with the skills to compete. That is why an investment in postsecondary education today is an investment in jobs tomorrow. But education is more than an economic imperative. It is the measure of our commitment to opportunity — it's the foundation of an engaged citizenry and a strong democracy.

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[116] The Honourable Greg Sorbara, Ontario's Minister of Finance, 2005 Ontario budget speech http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/budget/bud05/pdf/statement.pdf (August 2006)

7. Concluding Remarks

As the world changes around us, we are faced with several trends which through either direct or indirect mechanisms impact the adult literacy field. Experts across Canada acknowledge that demand is building for the field to professionalize.[117] This applies to Ontario more than any other jurisdiction in Canada thanks to its economic, social and demographic characteristics. There is a need to explore the entire range of possibilities that professionalization embodies. The *Ontario Learns* report, prepared by the Parliamentary Assistant to Ontario's Minister of Education, on the state of the adult education system, clearly outlines the necessity for a provincial framework that supports continuous improvement in the quality of instruction in adult education.[118]

Professionalization, in both conceptual and practical terms, is different than professional development. Professionalization is about much more than enhancement of individual skills of literacy practitioners. With that focus, the fundamentally important dimension of capacity-building for the entire adult literacy field as a whole has been neglected. This paper has repeatedly emphasized the need for capacity building; in the short-run in order to ensure that literacy practitioners can successfully respond to existing demands for performance accountability, and in the long-run in order to sustain performance improvements. Professional development is necessary but not sufficient by itself to help adult literacy practitioners improve the quality of service delivery.

Professionalization of adult education practitioners is increasingly becoming prominent on the policy agenda of advanced industrialized countries. These include countries such as the UK, New Zealand and the US which reveal similarities with Ontario in terms of their labour markets, demographics and skills shortages, as well as some of their socio-economic challenges. In that context, the contrast with Ontario's current realities of professionalization in adult literacy, as well as the perceived need for change among stakeholders is striking.

Performance accountability in adult literacy is here to stay. Performance accountability increases the burden of, and demands on, literacy practitioners. In order to successfully attain new performance targets and adjust to new initiatives, practitioners and delivery agencies need support in the form of capacity building measures. The role that professionalization might play in supporting practitioners vis-à-vis increasing accountability demands, and the benefits and functionality of professionalization in overseeing and enforcing accountability measures have been highlighted in detail in previous sections.

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[117] Allan Quigley's opening argument regarding the increasing demand for professionalization in a recent article on the topic has been echoed by the majority of experts/key informants interviewed for this project; Allan Quigley, ―What Does it Mean to be a ‗Professional?' The Challenges of Professionalization for Adult Literacy and Basic Education" 2006.

[118] Kathleen Wynne, ―Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System"

The issues surrounding professionalization, particularly those around different visions of adult literacy are complex. In some ways, professionalization seems far down the road for Ontario's adult literacy practitioners. It is therefore imperative that we start scrutinizing the status quo diligently, and begin discussions with practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders. The current context presents both challenges and opportunities. Starting a serious and active debate on professionalization in adult literacy in Ontario is an idea whose time has come.