OSSTF / FEESO

Adult Education Review - OSSTF Response

General Comments:

OSSTF welcomes a fresh look at adult education in Ontario. We are proud of our record of advocacy for these worthy students and programs. Ontario had an enviable reputation for adult education. In 1994 the province had the highest secondary school completion rate in Canada. A large part of that success was due to adult daytime secondary schools where 80,000 adult students were enrolled in credit course programs leading to a high school graduation diploma. Ten years later, less than 10% of that enrolment remains. and we are left with underemployed adults and the related costs to society that are so well identified in your discussion paper.

Although your discussion paper begins with a fine overview of existing adult education choices and social issues that need to be addressed, the last third of the paper, and specifically the examples used of basic skills programs elsewhere, **completely ignore adult secondary school programs and options**. We certainly do not need to look to other countries for successful models when ten years ago they looked to us. Our own Ontario programs, including many that were closed as a result of the 1996 funding cuts and some newer innovations, are far superior to the U.S. and British examples identified in the paper. While literacy and basic skills upgrading and targeted job skills training have their place, lifelong employability will best be achieved if these skills programs are integrated into adult-only community schools with specialist teachers and courses meeting their unique needs, and where high school diplomas can be earned and therefore future options maximized.

OSSTF has completed considerable research into the needs of adult learners. In 1996 we conducted the largest survey of adult learners without secondary school diplomas that had ever been conducted in Ontario. Based on a sample of 8000 students, the survey found that 63% were female, 53% needed English as a Second Language (ESL) upgrading, 48% were on social assistance, and students with disabilities and those from visible minorities were both represented at twice their proportion in the general Ontario population. Almost 90% of adult learners were over the age of 21. There is no reason to believe that these demographic characteristics of those requiring access to adult secondary schools would have significantly changed.

In the discussion paper, you indicate that a key to the adult education framework will be accountability for success. Success is a key feature of adult day schools. In1995 the Ontario Council of Adult Educators found that 83% of the graduates of our adult daytime secondary schools went directly into jobs or further education, and that 65% had their diploma, job retraining and ESL needs met within a year. The Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators surveyed its adult school graduates from 1995 and found that only 12% were still looking for work four months after graduation.

OSSTF also documented the devastating effects of the funding cuts in the late 1990's. Adult daytime enrolments declined from 76,800 in 1993-94 to a full-time-equivalent of 5843 in 2000-01. There is no reason to believe that the need has vanished. There is simply a pent-up demand and a decade of hopelessness. We now have a wonderful opportunity to rekindle that hope.

Specific Questions:

Question 1: Is there a need to have an Ontario definition for adult education? What would such a definition include?

There is already a definition of a mature or adult student in the *Ontario Secondary Schools Grade 9 to 12* (OSS) policy document - that is, students who are eighteen years of age or over who have been out of high school for at least one year. However, section 49.2(1) of the Education Act lists several criteria to be used to direct adult students into continuing education, and the funding formula provides only the paltry continuing education grant for students over the age of 21.

While we support all forms of lifelong learning, OSSTF feels that any definition of adult education needs to distinguish between formal education, i.e. adult education for credit, either at the secondary or post-secondary level, and non-formal or informal adult education programs which are designed for general interest learning or general knowledge. The requirements for obtaining success and for program delivery are very different in formal programs and no single definition or funding arrangement can adequately cover both at the same time.

OSSTF believes that there should be no age discrimination in funding. Adult secondary students have the same graduation requirements as adolescents and deserve proper funding, courses geared to successful graduation and professionally trained teachers and support staff. Day schools simply cannot operate within existing continuing education grants. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the age-defined continuing education grant be withdrawn or at least modified in order to meet the needs of those adult learners who require an Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma (OSSD). It is appropriate and even pedagogically sound to have a definition of a mature student for curriculum or program purposes, but not for funding purposes. **OSSTF recommends that a definition of adult education not be solely based on age or funding but on program.**

Question 2: How are adult education, training and upgrading opportunities addressing current and anticipated economic and social changes.

A decade ago, when adult day school programs were readily available in local community high schools all across the province, these needs were being well addressed. Currently, some opportunity (albeit severely reduced by funding cutbacks) still exists in large urban areas, but adult

programs are not available on an equitable basis throughout the province. Ontario must return to an equitable and accessible community-based model of adult education.

Many people will be changing jobs throughout their careers. A high school graduation diploma has become essentially a minimum credential for employment in Ontario. While GED and other equivalency diplomas may seem cost-effective alternatives to a full diploma, they have not received much recognition with Ontario employers or post-secondary institutions. In fact, Ontario colleges and universities treat GED holders no differently than they treat those mature students who seek entry to their programs without a high school diploma.

Immigration is no longer just an issue for the Greater Toronto Area. With newcomers settling across Ontario, it is essential that they be able to access the Ontario upgrading courses they need in local communities. ESL courses, both credit and non-credit, are not a frill but an essential requirement for immigrants to be able to take their proper position in Ontario's job force.

Many adult high schools offer training (HRDC and other agencies) programs, ESL, skills upgrading including co-operative education to get Ontario on-the-job experience, and credit courses all within the same building. These schools cannot, however, meet the demand because of funding constraints, nor can they provide the ancillary services needed to ensure student success such as guidance and career counselling, fully-funded computer labs and technical shops, or library assistance. Also, because the secondary adult funding formula only funds hourly-paid teachers, there is a high staff turnover and stability for the learner is undermined.

Here are a few examples of successful integration in Ontario adult day schools, past and present:

1. *The year is 1995. The Burnamthorpe adult day school in the Etobicoke (now Toronto) school board has five full-time guidance and intake assessment specialists to handle the continuous stream of hopeful adult students seeking further education. These expert teachers administer a set of tests that they have designed themselves to efficiently evaluate prior learning, literacy and math skills. They assess past and present educational credentials from dozens of countries and determine appropriate placements for the students. The counsellors then direct some of the students within the school to adult basic literacy or ESL upgrading programs, credit courses which help them earn an OSSD in a year or less, or skills upgrading courses such as highly successful training in the latest AutoCad drafting techniques. Others are offered advice at how to access external apprenticeships or college or university mature student programs. The Burnamthorpe counsellors are typical of the guidance/intake departments at other Toronto-area schools, which serve as a model for some PLAR processes that would later become policy for all of Ontario. [Note: The new funding formula introduced for adult schools in 1996 eliminated all funding for guidance and intake at adult schools.]*

2. *The year is 1999. The Ottawa-Carleton Adult High School, despite losing half of its enrolment and struggling with huge class sizes due to funding cuts, still retains a stable fully-salaried staff to offer a range of academic courses including technical subjects, co-operative education and guidance, and still had an on-site day care. To help generate funding, an adult training centre has been integrated into the school with funding from HRDC and private partners. The school also partners with the regional municipality in a program to evaluate educational plans for men and women trying to get off welfare.*

3. *The year is 2004. The Balmoral Adult Centre in Thunder Bay, which is almost the only northern Ontario program to survive eight years of funding cuts to adult education, still offers a mixture of badly-needed literacy and ESL non-credit upgrading programs and essential credit courses. The district school board decides to close the school and looks for the community college to take over the contracts with the federal and provincial governments for many of the programs. Confederation College agrees only to take over one out of 7 ABL/ESL programs, leaving the community scrambling to try to find someone to offer the rest. Six hundred learners may not be able to find the programs they need, and staff with up to 20 years experience teaching adult literacy will be laid off.*

We know how to meet the needs and make the system work again. **OSSTF recommends that the Adult Education Review project study successful Ontario models from the 1990's, work to cut the inter-agency and inter-governmental red tape, and facilitate the re-introduction of properly-funded adult day schools/learning centres as soon as possible.**

Question 3: What can be done within existing budgets?

It is the position of OSSTF, supported by statistics and research, that existing funding for adult day school credit programs is inadequate. In order to properly meet the needs of adults requiring access to credit high school programs, these programs must be funded at the same level as programs for adolescents.

However, within existing budgets, efficiencies can be found. Adult day school programs for credit could be made available to all adults within every community across the province by ensuring they are offered in any secondary school where there is demand and space. It simply makes financial sense to utilize empty secondary classrooms for adult students or to convert closed elementary schools to community-based adult day schools.

Also, some boards have found that they can maintain adult day schools with fully salaried, stable contract staff by integrating programs for 18-21 year old at-risk students into adult facilities. The Kawartha-Pine Ridge board, for example, found that they could offer a combined school with courses that meet the needs of both groups as long as approximately 40% of the student body were

under aged 21 so that they could attract a range of grants under the secondary school funding formula. While this program can not offer all adult services it would like to offer in a single school building, it can serve as a model for integration that would succeed admirably with better funding.

Younger learners who have had difficult secondary school experiences often benefit from the presence of older learners. Many courses and programs have been developed by our expert adult educators that meet the needs of both groups.

Many adult secondary schools offer a full range of formal and upgrading courses, including non-credit ESL and literacy programs and credit courses. In this way, students can progress seamlessly. Also, the most efficient use of a school building uses the same facility during the day and evening, so that general interest courses are run after school to serve the community. Fee-for-service continuing education courses can be self-supporting or even designed to make a profit to help fund other programming in the same building.

Question 4: If an opportunity to reallocate resources arises, what are the leading priorities for reinvestment?

Educating adults to the minimum standard of secondary school completion is the highest priority. This will reduce dependence on social assistance and provide meaningful employment and lifelong employability skills. Fully educated parents are also the best role model for their children.

To achieve this goal, it is essential to put money into secondary school programs for adults. The continuing education grant is simply inadequate. The foundation grant needs to be increased. The grants from the secondary funding formula that are most essential for adult students are:

- basic foundation grant
- Qualifications and Experience grant to be able to hire a stable cadre of contract teachers
- Learning Opportunities Grant to offer services to meet the needs of a student body at risk (see statistics in the introduction)
- facilities operating grant for any day school program.

OSSTF recommends that the Adult Education Review project immediately act to convene an inter-ministry committee including representatives from OSSTF and adult education administrators from school boards to make recommendations for funding priorities to enable every community to offer or expand an adult day school/learning centre.

Question 5. Do you agree with the elements for a framework that are described in this discussion paper? What would you change? What would you add?

The elements of the framework outlined in your document are generally acceptable. Some of the

specifics are problematic from OSSTF's perspective. For example, while distance learning may work for those who are educated and motivated and can afford high-speed computers, it is not feasible for many adult learners and will not address the need for accessibility or the need for ongoing personal support. Accessibility is best achieved by offering a wide range of adult programs in community schools.

Adult readiness programs leading to " high-school level proficiency" such as the "Work Readiness Credential" that you cite are not acceptable substitutes for a secondary school graduation diploma. Quick-fix programs and exam-based credentials such as the GED or the credential-granting programs that you use as examples do not teach the skills that employers want such as teamwork, problem solving, creative thinking etc. They are simply not long-term solutions. Also, experience in both Ontario community colleges and secondary schools show that PLAR programs require trained staff and adequate funding to be properly implemented.

The framework needs to be make explicit the requirement for seamless transitions between regular secondary school programs, including stay-in-school initiatives for the 16-18 year olds, and adult programming. For example, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship (OYAP)programs and co-operative education programs which are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education need to be fully co-ordinated with apprenticeship and job skills programs under the responsibility of MTCU. Our secondary schools already feature readily-accessible shops which, with much-needed and overdue upgrading of their equipment, can and will offer state-of-the-art training facilities for a seamless transition into skilled work for both students under and over the age of 18.

Question 6. How can we improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario?

The OSSTF recommendations made above point the way. We hope your project will learn from our own successful models, especially from the mid-1990's, try to faciliate better co-operation between government Ministries, restore funding on a priority basis, and offer seamless programs to take adult learners from basic literacy and ESL courses through skills upgrading through credit courses that will lead to graduation and success in work or post-secondary education. Adult public secondary schools offer the best chance to meet all of these needs, providing expert staff and a track record of success, and most of all ensuring equity of access to lifelong learning in every community in Ontario.

Adult Education Review

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Ontario

May 2004

INTRODUCTION

Adult education and training are critical for the economic prosperity and social well-being of individuals and communities in Ontario. Education and training allow adults opportunities to actively engage in the workforce, as well as to participate fully as citizens, to contribute to the strength of democracy, and to realize personal goals.

The government is committed to providing Ontarians with access to an adult education and training system that addresses current and anticipated economic and social challenges. This goal presents challenges for government at a time of fiscal restraint. For these reasons, we are conducting the adult education review.

In this review, we will concentrate on identifying realistic changes that can be made without increased expenditures – changes that will offer adults opportunities to move more flexibly towards their goals. We want to develop a coordinated and effective system of adult education programming in keeping with the government's economic and social priorities. The adult education review will focus on getting the information we need to develop a framework for adult education that is accountable, accessible and of high quality.

This discussion paper is one part of the review. We need your suggestions and ideas on how to achieve our goal and improve adult education. Together, we can make sure that adult education works for Ontario adults and for Ontario.

THE ADULT EDUCATION REVIEW

Kathleen Wynne, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, is leading the review. Ms. Wynne is holding a series of meetings with adult education stakeholders in the spring and early summer of 2004. Stakeholders invited to attend these meetings include adult learners, employer and labour representatives, academic experts in adult education, deliverers of adult programming, and policy makers across Ontario.

In addition to the meetings, this discussion paper is being posted on a website at http://www.gov.on.ca/adultedreview/. Members of the public are invited to contribute to the review by responding online to the six questions in this paper.

Information gathered at the meetings and from the website will be incorporated into a report that will provide a snapshot of adult education in Ontario. The report will identify areas for action to strengthen the effectiveness and coordination of adult education and training in order to meet economic and social challenges. Finally, the report will propose possible elements of a framework for adult education.

The report will be distributed to those who participated in the meetings and to decision makers in government, and posted on the website in fall 2004.

WHAT WE MEAN BY ADULT EDUCATION

There are several definitions of adult education. The one used by Statistics Canada describes adult education as "organized, structured programs of education adapted to the needs of persons 17 and older who are not in the regular school, college or university systems."[1]

In Manitoba, the definition is "consciously planned, organized, and intentional learning opportunities that take place in formal and

1. Statistics Canada, *A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada: Learning a Living* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 2001), p. 7.

non-formal learning settings to develop knowledge and skills with an identified goal or end result. Adult education begins at the point where adults meet situations which call for adjustments with respect to work, recreation, family-life, or community life."

In Prince Edward Island, adult education, while not a term used when referring to post-secondary programs, is defined as "any form of education participated in by persons regarded as adults (18 years of age or older and out of the public school system for at least one year) in the society to which they belong and who have not completed provincial high school requirements."[2]

Adult education in Ontario encompasses a wide variety of programming. While lifelong learning includes a range of activities in various settings, in this review we intend to focus on those specific program areas that address accessibility issues for citizens and that help people enter a dynamic learning culture. These programming areas include: adult English or French as a second language, basic literacy and numeracy, adult credit and non-credit programs; continuing education programs; correspondence/self-study and distance delivery; adult Native language programs; citizenship preparation; and academic upgrading. It will not directly include postsecondary education leading to a degree, diploma or certificate, or apprenticeship training programs. Also, while the review will not focus directly on the challenges faced by individuals who received their education and training abroad, it will be coordinated with the ministry's overall strategy in this area.

Among other things, the adult education programs looked at in this review are those that are critical for adults who must re-enter or "bridge" into the workforce, adults who must upgrade their skills to remain employed, and adults wanting to integrate into Ontario society. Many of these programs provide adults with the knowledge and skills they need to access post-secondary programs. They serve adults who left the formal education system early, adults who need to learn the language or culture of their new home, and adults who need employment-related language skills to work in their occupation in Ontario.

Some adult education programs exist outside the established policy framework of the elementary-secondary and postsecondary education systems, and yet they are vital to the concept of a complete system and critical to any society that subscribes to the value of lifelong learning. Adult education programs make the system work for all adults, not only those who move on the established tracks.

Adults need education and training that works efficiently, effectively and flexibly for them – that is available when they need it, where they need it and how they need it.

WHAT QUESTIONS THE REVIEW WILL CONSIDER

During the course of the review, we will be asking the following questions:

Question 1: ***Is there a need to have an Ontario definition for adult education? What would such a definition include?***

Question 2: ***How are adult education, training and upgrading opportunities addressing current and anticipated economic and social challenges?***

2. Biss, John, *Adult Learning and Adult Education: A provincial/territorial survey of current polices and practices* (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, January 2004), Appendix A.

Question 3: ***What can be done within existing budgets to enhance learning opportunities?***

Question 4: ***If an opportunity to reallocate resources arises, what are the leading priorities for reinvestment?***

Question 5: ***Do you agree with the elements for a framework that are described in this discussion paper? What would you change? What would you add?***

Question 6: ***How can we improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario?***

THE LINKS BETWEEN ADULT EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ADULT EDUCATION AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Adult education has taken on increased importance in the last decade, as the relationship between skill levels and peoples' participation in the economy and the community is recognized. Adult education provides opportunities for employment preparation, skills development, upgrading, literacy and language acquisition. It also fosters citizenship preparation, cultural adjustment, social inclusion and community participation.

Adult Education and Economic Growth

Ontario is experiencing rapid technological change and a slowing down of labour force growth. Concerns about the effect of these changes have been voiced by many organizations, including ones involved in workplace training and apprenticeship, such as the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association and construction sector stakeholders.

At one time, people could expect to leave school, enter employment and remain in the same job most of their working lives. Now a person can change jobs and retrain several times during a lifetime. Developments in technology mean that workers have to perform new tasks and, frequently, have to adjust to new work environments. This means that we must learn new skills quickly.

Two key and interrelated factors affecting the quality of the labour force and labour force growth are youth dropout rates and the aging of baby boomers. While, overall, a relatively small number of young people will be available to enter the workforce, our retirement rates are high. We know many of our students are struggling. Recent research by Professor Alan King of Queen's University estimates that, of those students who began Grade 9 in Ontario in 1999, at least 25 per cent (40,000 students) will leave school without graduating.[3] While some of these students will return to school later, it is the adult education system they will need to access upon their return. Add to this information the fact that baby boomers make up about 47 per cent of the labour force. Ten years from now, half of them will be 55 or over, and 18 per cent of them will be over the age of 60. Given these statistics, employers will face considerable challenges in meeting their needs for workers and skills.[4]

In 2001, about 557,900 immigrants were in Ontario's labour force. This represented 57 per cent of the total number who arrived in Canada in the 1990s. Immigration will continue to account for a large percentage of the new entrants to the labour force.[5] Without immigration, Ontario's labour force would experience sharp declines rather than the slower rates of growth that are

3. King, Alan, *Double Cohort Study: Phase Three Report* (Ministry of Education, October 2003), p. 74.

4. Statistics Canada, *The Changing Profile of Canada's Labour Force*, (Analysis Series, 2001 Census) (Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, 2001), p. 10.

5. Ibid, p. 12.

projected. Immigration will continue to account for a large percentage of the entrants to the labour force.[6]

Some immigrants to Ontario have received training in trades and professions in their home countries. The government has a strategy to help remove barriers facing these individuals. As part of this strategy the government is creating partnerships with occupational regulatory bodies, employers and other stakeholders. The adult education review will be coordinated with this strategy.

Technological change has led to an increased demand by employers for workers with higher levels of skill and education. Between 1996 and 2001, jobs requiring college or university education or apprenticeship training accounted for close to 60 per cent of all employment growth in Ontario. Jobs requiring less than a high school education contributed less than one tenth of the job growth over that period.[7]

The relationship between employment and a person's language skill levels needs to be recognized. Individuals with poor language skill levels have higher unemployment rates and participate less in the labour force. The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) revealed that 20 per cent of Ontario adults (IALS level 1) do not have the basic reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary for work, and that another 24 per cent (IALS level 2) lack the literacy skills to meet changing labour market needs.[8]

Percentage distribution of language skills as measured by IALS levels and by employment status for Ontario residents 16 and older [9]

IALS level	1	2	3	4/5
Employed	12.7	20.1	34.7	31.6
Unemployed	33.1	26.6	26.2	14.1
Out of labour force	37.1	26.9	23.8	12.3

Adult workers' participation in continuous education and training can compensate for "skills obsolescence." For example, the average level of adult literacy declines sharply with age in countries where the participation rate in adult education is weak, whereas literacy levels fall only marginally with age in countries where the training participation rate is high. Adult education and training contribute to the skill enhancement and skill retention rates of workers.[10]

According to a Statistics Canada survey, 30 per cent of Ontario adults participated in adult education and training in 1997, devoting over 200 hours each to learning activities. Twenty-three per cent of adults took programs and courses related to employment.[11]

While we know the participation rate in adult education and training, we do not know the hidden unmet demand – the number of people who would like to take adult education programs, but who are unable to because of inaccessible programming or personal barriers. The review will help us assess this demand and ensure that pathways exist for adults to realize their potential

6. Ibid, p. 13.

7. Based on 2002-2007 occupational projections by Labour Market Information and Research, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Human Resources and Skills Development, Ontario Region.

8. Ministry of Education and Training, *Adult Literacy in Ontario* (Queens Printer for Ontario, 1998) p. 3.

9. Ibid, p. 24.

10. Wooseok, Ok and Peter Tergeist, *Improving Workers' Skills: Analytical evidence and the role of the social partners* (Paris : Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development , 2003), p. 15.

11. Statistics Canada, *A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada: Learning a Living*, p. 70.

in the labour market and for Ontario to have the highly skilled labour force needed to maintain economic growth.

Adult Education and Personal Well-Being

Adult education serves civic, social and personal purposes as well as economic ones. It enriches our communities, helps people achieve their potential as citizens and contributes to their personal growth.

Adult education can contribute to the goals of democratic renewal and healthy citizens. Reading, writing and speaking skills are critical for citizens' participation in a democracy. In the document *Strengthening Our Literacy Foundation Is Key to Canada's Future*, the Movement for Canadian Literacy stated: "... poor literacy skills effectively bar a large percentage of our population, both Canadian-born and newcomers, from participating in civic life."[12]

Adult education can contribute to health and well-being. According to one study conducted by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, patients with the lowest literacy levels had average annual health-care costs of $12,974 US, compared with $2,969 US for the overall population studied. In another study, recorded by the Council on Scientific Affairs, of the 958 low-income patients the study followed over two years, patients with inadequate literacy skills were nearly twice as likely to have been hospitalized during the previous year (31.5 per cent, compared to 14.9 per cent), a relationship that persisted after adjustment for health status and various socio-economic indicators. Some of these incidents were attributed to misuse or misunderstanding of medication or health information due to low literacy skills.[13]

Adult education programming offers adults the opportunity to engage in their community while developing skills that help them in their everyday lives. General interest programs can help adults expand their skills. These sorts of non-credit courses can also contribute greatly to a feeling of social inclusion. For example, seniors who learn new skills on the computer that enable them to access the Internet and communicate with their friends and family through e-mail are likely to feel more connected to their communities.

The review also offers the opportunity to broaden accountability for government expenditure on adult education programs by including performance measures in the framework. There is an increasing need to measure the attainment of skills for employment, education, and training purposes. The challenge is to capture both the measurable results of adult education service delivery as it contributes to the economy and the qualitative results of learning as it contributes to society.

A review leading to the development of a framework for adult education in Ontario is timely. We have an opportunity to design a framework for adult education that is responsive to current and anticipated economic and social challenges and to help achieve Ontario's commitment to prosperity, health and the increased participation of citizens in democracy.

---

12. Movement for Canadian Literacy, *Strengthening Our Literacy Foundation Is Key to Canada's Future: Recommendations for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities* (Ottawa: Movement for Canadian Literacy, 2003), p. 6.

13. *Recommendations for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and Status of Persons with Disabilities*, April 2003.

POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF AN ADULT EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

As noted above, the development of a framework for adult education provides an opportunity to determine overall goals for adult education programming with a clear set of priorities that are aligned with Ontario's economic and social objectives. This section of the paper sets out a number of possible elements for a framework, based on research and the government's goals and priorities, for the consideration of those participating in the review.

A framework should facilitate the development of clear learner pathways, the recognition of prior adult learning, the development of policies that support the accessibility of services, and accountability for the effectiveness and efficiency of programs. A framework also needs to incorporate both economic and social outcomes for participants and the community. A framework should ensure that there are links between adult education programming and the secondary and postsecondary systems, as together they form a complete adult education and training system.

A framework needs to include mechanisms that allow the system to be dynamic and responsive to the emerging needs of society and the economy. A framework also needs to set out the roles and relationships of stakeholders and other partners, and to emphasize the basic expectation that the services and delivery mechanisms will serve the needs of the users of the system.

Ontario already has some of the essential elements of an adult education system. They include coordinated local service planning, community access points, strategic partnerships, e-government, flexible learning and an existing accountability structure that emphasizes results based management.

Research on best practices in adult education and training services in other jurisdictions indicates that the best frameworks share similar characteristics. An excellent framework is one that is coordinated and linked, accessible and inclusive, innovative, and accountable and effective. These characteristics are described below, with brief examples of existing models that embody the characteristics.

Coordination and Linkage

A framework for adult education needs to explain how service provision is coordinated with, and linked to, employment and other educational opportunities. Participants enter the system and have their prior learning recognized to ensure their efficient participation. Programming is linked so that participants have clear pathways to their next step. The role of governments is to ensure that all programs undertaken by participants are compatible and mutually supportive.

Example

In the United States, each state is developing and implementing educational content standards in reading and language arts, mathematics and English language acquisition. The standards outline a clear sequence of adult literacy activities that lead to high-school-level proficiency and readiness for college.

Equipped for the Future (EFF), as this standard-based reform initiative is called, was established almost 10 years ago. It has 16 content standards that define the knowledge and skills adults need in order to successfully carry out their roles as parents and family members, citizens and community members and workers. The four main skill areas are decision-making skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills and lifelong learning skills. These standards are aligned with what students need to know to

continue to the next level of education and employment. Articulation agreements, counselling activities and other strategies are in place to ensure smooth transitions. Several states are working to develop an EFF Work Readiness Credential that will meet performance requirements for the workplace.

Accessibility and Inclusion

An adult education framework needs to address issues of accessibility and the ways in which regional, cultural and linguistic diversities will be incorporated into services, curriculum and methodologies. The innovative use of technology can expand the number of delivery options available to serve geographically dispersed learners and those who are unable to access traditional learning settings because of personal and physical challenges.

Support services, such as guidance and counselling, availability of child care or transportation, cross-cultural training for service providers, American Sign Language interpretation, and financial support, address the issues that serve as barriers for adults to participate.

Example

In the United Kingdom, the government wants individuals to have the dignity that essential skills provide. It claims that the need for essential skills is more than an economic argument; it is also about social inclusion. The government's Skills for Life strategy is intended to ensure that those most at risk of exclusion are better able to lead full, active, meaningful and purposeful lives at home, at work, within their communities and families, and in society as a whole. Skills for Life also aims to ensure that employers have the skills they need to support the success of their businesses.

A policy framework defines the information and advice services that adults should receive and the standards to which those services should be delivered.

Innovation

A framework for adult education should include mechanisms for innovation. Partnerships can provide opportunities for integrated hands-on experiences such as work placements, volunteer work experience, mentoring and skills training.

Example

The government in the United Kingdom initiated the innovative Developing Embedded Basic Skills project. The project's December 2002 newsletter explains that "embedded language, literacy and numeracy refer to courses, experiences and activities which develop the learning of these skills in the context of another course, experience or activity."[14]

In the United States, many states deliver the Job Initiatives Program. This program brings together employers, trainers and community agency staff to create work-specific training programs that serve both employers and job seekers. Most focus on low-income residents and provide programming in workplace readiness, communication and numeracy skills, and job search and interviewing skills. They assess skills and aptitudes and barriers to employment, and help job seekers gain access to needed services. The key factors contributing to successful outcomes for the Job Initiatives Program are a high level of service integration that is intended to serve "the whole person" and contextualized, relevant learning opportunities.

---

14. *Developing Embedded Basic Skills Newsletter*, "Embedded Basic Skills: A Working Definition," Linda Smith, Issue 1, December 2002, page 3.

Accountability and Effectiveness

Adult education programming needs to result in an increased level of participation in both the labour force and society. A framework should therefore include processes for developing standards against which results are measured and tracked, and for changing standards to reflect improved performance, changing conditions and stakeholder needs. Performance measures need to attach importance to evidence of increased income and employment and increased participation in social endeavours (parents taking part in their children's education, participation in voting, volunteering, etc.). Performance measures also need to ensure that services are provided by competent practitioners, that content is relevant, that consumer satisfaction is tracked, and that appropriate action is taken when necessary.

Example

Programs in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States have varying accountability features and are at different stages of development. However, they do have common structures: systems for recognizing prior learning and certification; competency-based standards for assessing and measuring progress and for granting recognition; shared involvement of government, business/industry/labour, education providers, and consumers; certification of service providers and/or services (trainers, assessors, programs); and the integration of employment and occupational skills with literacy and second-language learning and with soft and other support skills.

The programs also share goals: meeting skills demand and responding to changing needs in the economy; ensuring that the learning is relevant to all parties; offering programs that are flexible and user-friendly; clear accountability; and true partnerships involving government, business/industry/labour, education providers, and the consumer.

NEXT STEPS

As we mentioned at the beginning of this discussion paper, you can contribute to the adult education review by responding to the questions below on our website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/adultedreview/. In fall 2004, a report will be issued to all participants and government decision makers and posted on the website. The report will summarize the views expressed online and in the meetings, and will propose areas for action and the possible elements of an effective adult education framework.

Again, here are the questions:

Question 1: *Is there a need to have an Ontario definition for adult education? What would such a definition include?*

Question 2: ***How are adult education, training and upgrading opportunities addressing current and anticipated economic and social challenges?***

Question 3: ***What can be done within existing budgets to enhance learning opportunities?***

Question 4: ***If an opportunity to reallocate resources arises, what are the leading priorities for reinvestment?***

Question 5: ***Do you agree with the elements for a framework that are described in this discussion paper? What would you change? What would you add?***

Question 6: ***How can we improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario?***

We thank all participants for their suggestions and advice and for the inspiration that we know they will bring to this review.

Adult Education Review

www.edu.gov.on.ca/adultedreview/

adultedreview@edu.gov.on.ca