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What Counts as Adult Education?

What is adult education? What are the boundaries of the field that help distinguish it from other educational and social endeavors? What does it mean to be an adult? What "counts" as adult education, and what doesn't? Who is or is not an adult educator? These are some of the questions that underlie this first chapter on the scope of the field. We begin by asking how you, the reader, connect with the field of adult education: how do you work with adults in an educational capacity? We then explore the concepts of "adult" and "education," which leads us to defining "adult education" and related terms.

In the second section of the chapter, we review what people have written about the aims, goals, or purposes of adult education, and how the emphasis on various purposes has shifted over the years. Again, we ask that you consider the goals and purposes of what you do as an educator of adults. In the final section, we explore how this theme of what counts as adult education structures the field's relationship to the larger world of education.

Defining Adult Education

Defining adult education is akin to the proverbial elephant being described by five blind men: it depends on where you are standing and how you experience the phenomenon. Perhaps you teach an

aerobics class several mornings a week at your local YMCA or community center. Maybe your background is in nursing, and you plan continuing education programs for the hospital staff. You may have organized a group of citizens in your community to protest rent gouging or environmental pollution. You might administer a literacy or job-skills training program, or perhaps you work as a private consultant conducting management-training seminars for companies.

These are just a few examples of people's experiences with adult education. You, and many others like you, have probably not considered how you might be a part of a field larger than the particular arena in which you work. Yet the field of adult education encompasses all of these components. What your individual experience in adult education has in common with others' experiences is that you are working with adults in some organized, educational activity.

The Meaning of "Adult"

One key to defining adult education lies with the notion of "adult." But who is an adult? In North America, adulthood as a stage of life is a relatively new concept. According to Jordan (1978), the psychological sense of adulthood, "as we ordinarily think of it today, is largely an artifact of twentieth-century American culture [that] emerged by a process of exclusion, as the final product resulting from prior definitions of other stages in the human life cycle" (p. 189). The concept "did not appear in America at all until after the Civil War and not really until the early twentieth century" (p. 192).

Today, adulthood is considered to be a sociocultural construction; that is, the answer to the question of who is an adult is constructed by a particular society and culture at a particular time. For example, in Colonial America the notion of adulthood was based on English common law wherein males reached the "age of discretion" at fourteen and females at twelve (Jordan, 1978). In a monograph on adult education in Colonial America, Long (1976) considered "the formal and informal learning activities of individuals above twelve [to] fourteen years of age in Colonial America as adult education" (p. 4).

If biologically defined, many cultures consider puberty to be the entry into adulthood. Legal definitions of adulthood are generally anchored in chronological age, which varies within the same culture. In the United States, for example, men and women can vote at age eighteen, drink at twenty-one, leave compulsory schooling at sixteen, and in some states be tried in court as an adult at fourteen.

Other definitions of adulthood hinge upon psychological maturity or social roles. Knowles (1980b) uses both of these criteria, stating that "individuals should be treated as adults educationally" if they behave as adults by performing adult roles and if their self-concept is that of an adult—that is, the extent that an "individual perceives herself or himself to be essentially responsible for her or his own life" (p. 24). Knowles's definition of adult presents some problems. What about the teenage parent living on welfare? The married, full-time college student? The adults in prison or in a mental hospital?

In considering all of the ways in which the term can be defined, Paterson (1979) offers a way out of the quagmire. At the heart of the concept is the notion that adults are older than children, and as a result there is a set of expectations about their behavior: "Those people (in most societies, the large majority) to whom we ascribe the status of adults may and do evince the widest possible variety of intellectual gifts, physical powers, character traits, beliefs, tastes, and habits. But we correctly deem them to be adults because, by virtue of their age, we are justified in requiring them to evince the basic qualities of maturity. Adults are not necessarily mature. But they are supposed to be mature, and it is on this necessary supposition that their adulthood justifiably rests" (p. 13).

Education Versus Learning

Adult *education* can be distinguished from adult *learning,* and indeed it is important to do so when trying to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of adult education. Adult learning is a cognitive process

internal to the learner; it is what the learner does in a teaching-learning transaction, as opposed to what the educator does. Learning also includes the unplanned, incidental learning that is part of everyday life. As Thomas (1991a) explains: "Clearly education must be concerned with specific learning outcomes and with the processes of learning needed for students to achieve those outcomes. Thus education cannot exist without learning. Learning, however, not only can exist outside the context of education but probably is most frequently found there" (p. 17).

Playing golf is thus differentiated from golf *lessons*, just as reading a mystery novel is different from participating in a Great Books Program. The golf lessons and the Great Books Program are designed to bring about learning and are examples of adult education. Still, playing golf and reading a book may involve learning, and herein lies a source of confusion for those trying to grasp the nature of adult education. Although one may have learned something while playing golf or reading a mystery novel, these activities would not be considered adult education, because they were not designed to bring about learning.

Using another example, a person who becomes ill may learn a lot about dealing with the illness through reading articles in magazines, talking with friends, or seeing a television show; this is adult learning embedded in life experience. If the same person were to participate in a patient-education program or a self-help group focusing on the illness, he or she would be involved in adult education. The difference is that the patient-education program and the self-help group are systematic, organized events intended to bring about learning.

So while learning can occur both incidentally and in planned educational activities, it is only the planned activities that we call adult *education*. And while we include references to adult learning as an integral part of the enterprise, our focus in this book is to describe the field of adult *education*.

Some Definitions of Adult Education

A definition of adult education, then, usually includes some referent (1) to the adult status of students, and (2) to the notion of the activity being purposeful or planned. An early, often-quoted definition by Bryson (1936) captures these elements. Bryson proposed that adult education consists of "all the activities with an educational purpose that are carried on by people, engaged in the ordinary business of life" (p. 3).

More than fifty years later, Courtney (1989) offers a definition—"for practitioners, . . . those preparing to enter the profession, and . . . curious others who have connections with the field"—that echoes Bryson's: "Adult education is an intervention into the ordinary business of life—an intervention whose immediate goal is change, in knowledge or in competence" (p. 24). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) are even more specific with regard to the two criteria cited above: "Adult education is a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills" (p. 9).

Some definitions emphasize the learner, some the planning, and others the process. Long (1987) believes that adult education "includes all systematic and purposive efforts by the adult to become an educated person" (p. viii). Although critiqued for its emphasis on formal education that seems to exclude self-directed efforts, Verner's often-cited definition (1964) focuses on planning: "Adult education is a relationship between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for people whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society" (p. 32).

Probably the best-known definition emphasizing the process of adult education is that of Houle (1972). He argues that it is a

process involving planning by individuals or agencies by which adults "alone, in groups, or in institutional settings . . . improve themselves or their society" (p. 32). Finally, Knowles (1980b) also identifies adult education "in its broadest sense" as "the process of adults learning." In its more technical sense, adult education is "a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives" (p. 25). Knowles also proposes a third meaning that "combines all these processes and activities into the idea of a movement or field of social practice" (p. 25).

Defining adult education, then, depends to some extent upon where one stands or, in keeping with the theme of this chapter, what counts. Experiences as an adult learner, and experiences with planning, organizing, and perhaps teaching in an adult educational setting lead to varying understandings of the field. What is common to all notions of adult education is that some concept of adult undergirds the definition, and that the activity is intentional. Likewise, the adult educator is one who has "an educational role in working with adults" (Usher and Bryant, 1989, p. 2). Therefore, we define adult education as *activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults.*

Clearly, our definition and several of the others included above reflect a broad-based perspective on what counts as adult education: it is virtually any activity for adults designed to bring about learning. Thus, all of the examples at the beginning of this section would be considered adult education. Furthermore, we would consider the aerobics instructor, nurse, private consultant, literacy worker, and community activist all to be engaged in adult education.

Historically, the term *adult education* was preceded by several other terms designed to capture what was seen as a new educational phenomenon (Stubblefield and Rachal, 1992). In the nineteenth century, the term *university extension* was imported from England, but its meaning was too narrow to capture what was evolving in North America. "Popular education" was promoted by some in the

late 1800s not only to include university extension but also to reflect a concern with appealing to the masses. The term *home education* was promoted by Melvil Dewey, inventor of the book-cataloguing system, to reflect general self-improvement for adults.

Sporadic use of the term *adult education* began to appear in the last decade or two of the nineteenth century, becoming more popular by about 1900. Stubblefield and Rachal (1992) write that "the period from 1891 to 1916 can be regarded as the gestational period in the evolution of the phrase that would both encompass and to a significant degree displace most of its competitors" (p. 114).

Three events occurred after World War I that served to cement the usage of *adult education* as the preferred term: a British publication reviewing the status of adult education was published, the World Association for Adult Education was formed, and the Carnegie Corporation became actively involved in establishing the field of adult education (Stubblefield and Rachal, 1992).

The scope of activities that the term *adult education* covers has evolved over the years. Knowles (1977), who documented the broad history of the field, observed that adult education has typically emerged in response to specific needs, and that its growth has been episodic rather than steady. In the Colonial period, for example, adult education had a moral and religious imperative, whereas after the colonies became a nation, adult education was more focused on developing leaders and good citizens.

The modern era of adult education has been concerned with educating and retraining adults to keep the United States competitive in a global economic market. In addition, population trends such as growing ethnic diversity and the "graying" of North America; the shift from an industrial to a service- and information-based economy, which is displacing workers and creating a need for retraining and new careers; and technological advances are forces shaping adult education today.

Various responses to these challenges have contributed to defining the meaning and scope of adult education. For example, the

term *human resource development* (HRD) has sprung into use in North America in reference to the training, education, and development of employees in the workplace. Likewise, *distance education* reflects many of the technological advances that allow instruction to take place between geographically separated teachers and adult students.

Currently, there are multiple and sometimes competing conceptions of what adult education encompasses. Rubenson (1989), for example, points out that North American adult education is most often defined in terms of learners and learning, thus giving it a particularly psychological orientation in which "the context of education is largely ignored" (p. 59). Others see the context mainly in terms of technical and economic imperatives and thus are most comfortable with a human resource development orientation. Still others, such as Cunningham (1989), want a social action and community focus to have more prominence.

How we position ourselves to view the field is crucial to what is included in adult education. "If we ask different questions, seek different information, or allow different boundaries," Cunningham writes, "we might define the education of adults broadly as a human activity, not a profession or a field seeking 'scientific' verification. We might look beyond institutions to the popular social movements, grass roots education, voluntary associations, and communities producing and disseminating knowledge as a human activity" (pp. 33–34).

Related Terms and Concepts

A number of terms and concepts are used by some people interchangeably with the term *adult education*. Some terms are being promoted as preferred substitutes for adult education, while others refer to specific forms of adult education; and some are more popular outside North America.

Considered an equivalent of the broadest definition of adult education, the term *continuing education* is growing in usage in North

America. Apps, in his book *Problems in Continuing Education* (1979), makes the case for adopting the term rather than *adult education* because "for many people, 'adult education' connotes 'catching up'" and is thus associated exclusively with adult basic education (p. 73); this association is underscored by much national and state legislation. Furthermore, the use of the term *continuing education* gets around the problem of defining "adult" and the use of the term *adult educator* (as opposed to *child educator?* Apps asks). Finally, adult education is seen in a restricted way by some as an extension of the public school system (Apps, 1979).

Perhaps because institutions of higher education have also used the term *continuing education* to mean evening and weekend degree-credit offerings for adults, and because the word *continuing* is associated with professionals staying updated and credentialed (continuing professional education), the term by itself has not caught on as a replacement for *adult education*. Rather, *adult and continuing education* seems to be the preferred usage. For example, an encyclopedia-type overview of the field of adult education has been published approximately every ten years since the 1930s. The titles of these "handbooks" have all contained the term *adult education,* until one was published in 1989 with the title *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education.*

It was also in the 1980s that the major professional association for adult educators added the word *continuing* to its name. Similarly, the popular *New Directions* monograph series, originally titled *New Directions for Continuing Education,* underwent a name change in 1990 to become *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education;* this was done in an effort to broaden the target audience for the publication. Finally, a 1990 reference book defining terms in the field is titled *An International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education* (Jarvis, 1990).

Other common terms in use in North America refer to specific forms or content areas of adult education and reflect specific purposes and goals. *Adult basic education* refers to instructional programs

for adults whose basic skills (reading, writing, and computation) are assessed below the ninth-grade level. Adult basic education usually includes *adult literacy education,* which focuses on adults whose basic skills are fourth-grade level or below.

For those adults whose skills are above the eighth-grade level but who have not graduated from high school, the term *adult secondary education* is used. Adult secondary education includes the general education development, or GED, diploma (a high school diploma through examination), high school credit programs for adults, and external diploma programs. Finally, "English as a second language" (ESL) programs are for adults who are not native speakers of English.

Postsecondary institutions, including vocational-technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities, use a variety of terms to refer to credit and noncredit activities that extend beyond the daytime programs serving students of traditional college age. *Continuing education,* mentioned above, is one such term; *general extension* and *university extension* are others; while *community services* (which usually refers to noncredit leisure courses and cultural activities, particularly in the community college setting) is yet another.

The term *extension* is also used by the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), a program funded at federal, state, and local levels with offices in most counties of each state. CES offers information and educational programs to all residents on topics such as homemaking, agriculture, youth, the environment, public policy, and so on (Blackburn, 1988; Forest, 1989).

Two other terms, *nontraditional education* (or *nontraditional study*) and *community education,* are commonly used in North America. Invented in North America and popularized by the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, *nontraditional education* refers to the variety of ways in which adults can receive credit toward a degree in higher education. These ways include transfer credit, credit for experiential learning, and credit by examination. External degree programs

and completion programs for bachelor's degrees make use of these nontraditional credit options. *Community education* may refer to any formal or informal action-oriented or problem-solving education that takes place in the community, or it may refer to a specific movement "supported for many years by the Mott Foundation and dedicated to making neighborhood public schools centers for educational, cultural, and recreational activity for people of all ages" (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982, p. 13).

International Terms

A number of terms referring to adult education are more commonly used outside of North America. *Lifelong learning* and *lifelong education* actually refer to a concept of education broader than adult education; both terms cast learning or education as a cradle-to-grave activity in which public schooling as well as adult and continuing education are important but not exclusive players. This concept requires a rethinking of a society's educational structure, the timing of compulsory education, and so on.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has taken the lead in promoting lifelong learning as a kind of master concept "denoting an overall scheme aimed both at restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system; [it] should extend throughout life, include all skills and branches of knowledge, use all possible means, and give the opportunity to all people for full development of the personality" (UNESCO, 1977, p. 2).

In the United States, the terms can be found in the literature and rhetoric of both general education and adult education, but not much in practice. The U.S. Congress actually passed the Lifelong Learning Act in 1976 but never appropriated funds to implement it. Worldwide, "lifelong learning" is beginning to take precedence over "lifelong education." This probably represents a general shift from thinking in terms of education to thinking in terms of learning—a

shift reflected in 1985 in UNESCO's focusing "not on the right to be educated but on the right to learn" (Thomas, 1991a, p. 18).

In a recent analysis of the terms *lifelong education* and *adult education*, Wain (1993) points out that "the common identification of lifelong education with adult education" has had "detrimental consequences . . . for both" (p. 85). According to Wain, UNESCO's withdrawal of support for the lifelong education movement, coupled with the movement's lack of substantive theoretical contributions since 1979, have resulted in the movement apparently being "on its way out" (p. 93).

Education permanente is the French term for lifelong education and is sometimes used in Europe, as is *recurrent education*, which again refers to lifelong learning and education. Recurrent education, though, has the additional connotation of alternating periods of work, leisure, and education or study throughout a lifetime, as life events and changing circumstances dictate (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1973).

Three terms very popular internationally and growing in use in North America are *formal education*, *informal education*, and *nonformal education*. This tripartite classification of educational activities, most often associated with adult education, is accredited to Coombs (Coombs, with Prosser and Ahmed, 1973). *Formal education* refers to educational institutions including all levels of schools both private and public, as well as specialized programs offering technical and professional training. *Informal education* is generally unplanned, experience-based, incidental learning that occurs in the process of people's daily lives—learning something, for example, by perusing a magazine in a doctor's office, from casual conversation with friends, from watching television, and so forth.

Coombs defines *nonformal education* as "any organized educational activity outside the established formal system . . . that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives" (p. 11). A Bible-study class offered by a local church, or a first aid program given by the Red Cross, are examples of nonformal edu-

cation, which has become an accepted category for international and community development activities (Ewert, 1989); it is also a rubric for community-based or community development efforts in North America (Hamilton and Cunningham, 1989).

Finally, some but not all writers align "popular education" with nonformal education. Jarvis (1990) defines *popular education* as follows: "A term widely used in Latin America, having the following connotations: education is a right of all people, even the masses who were excluded from the school system's benefits; education which is designed for the people by the people; an instrument in the ideological class struggle, radical and often revolutionary; and education which involves *praxis* inasmuch as the education learned is then put into practice in the class struggle" (p. 269). However, Jarvis notes that the term *popular education* can also refer to traditional adult education in Denmark, Greece, and elsewhere in Europe.

Practice-Related Terms

Our tour of the landscape of adult education in North America would not be complete if we did not point out some of the concepts and terms that have come to be associated with our field of practice. Two major concepts are *andragogy* and *self-directed learning*. *Andragogy* is a term imported by Knowles (1980b) from Europe; he defines it as "the art and science of helping adults learn"—in contrast to *pedagogy,* which refers to children's learning (p. 43).

The assumptions underlying andragogy characterize adult learners and have formed the basis for structuring learning activities with adults. The concept is continually debated in the literature (see, for example, Pratt, 1993); nevertheless, it underpins much of the writing about the practice of adult education. In Europe, and especially in Eastern Europe, andragogy not only encompasses adult education but also refers to social work and community organization or university departments of study (Jarvis, 1990).

Self-directed learning, another major concept in our field, can be traced back to early research and writing by Houle (1961), Tough

(1967 and 1979), and Knowles (1975). This body of work refers to that learning in which *"the learner chooses to assume the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating those learning experiences"* (Caffarella, 1993, p. 28, emphasis in original). Closely related is the notion of *learner self-direction*, which refers to personal characteristics that predispose adults toward self-directed learning. Both andragogy and self-directed learning are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Other terms commonly in use in the practice of adult education are *program*, *facilitator*, and *practitioner*. While schools and postsecondary institutions usually speak of "curriculum" to mean the content—usually in a particular sequence—that is envisioned for a group of students to learn, the preferred term in adult education is *program*. What is meant by this term is the total educational offerings of an institution or agency (an evening-school program, for example), activities designed for a particular clientele (an older-adult program), or a specific topical activity (an environmental-waste program). A program can consist of activities of varying time lengths, ranging from ongoing programs to semester-length offerings to one-hour workshops.

Rather than "teacher" or "instructor," adult educators prefer to use the word *facilitator*, which denotes a more collaborative, student-centered mode of interaction. Finally, *practitioner* refers to anyone involved at whatever level in the planning and implementation of learning activities for adults; the term is generally interchangeable with *adult educator*. Usher and Bryant (1989) suggest that a spectrum exists in terms of practitioners' "consciousness of having an educational role in working with adults." This continuum ranges from "the full-time 'professional' educator of adults [to] the individual whose vocational and non-vocational activities have repercussions for adult learning" (p. 2).

Therefore, the answer to the question "Who is an adult educator?" is quite broad and again reflects what "counts" to the person doing the defining. Whether or not one *identifies* oneself as an adult

educator—or is even aware of the role—varies with the setting and level of professional preparation. (See Chapter Nine for a more thorough discussion of professional roles.)

Goals and Purposes

Most practitioners in adult education are so caught up in the everyday concerns of getting the job done that they rarely consider what they ultimately hope to accomplish. And many have not identified themselves as adult educators, even though they may be working with adults in an educative capacity. The goals and purposes of the activity thus tend to become aligned with specific content. The aerobics instructor, for example, probably thinks of physical fitness as the goal; the nurse educator, of increased medical knowledge; and the consultant, of training employees to be better managers.

However, if we consider the purpose or goal of our work from the broader perspective of adult education, we get some different answers. Looking at the overall goals and purposes of one's practice is one way of situating oneself in the field; it is also another way of asking what counts as adult education. In Colonial America, for example, the primary purpose of adult education was salvation; learning to read the Bible was the means. After the Revolutionary War, the need for an informed and enlightened citizenry to sustain and lead the new democratic republic became crucial. Thus, the moral and religious emphasis of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was eclipsed by civic education by the late 1800s.

Modern-day goals and purposes of adult education have been catalogued in various ways, from general and sweeping categorization to detailed typologies. Two general purposes of adult education identified by Lindeman ([1926] 1989) have remained central to the field. "Adult education," Lindeman wrote, "will become an agency of progress if its short-time goal of self-improvement can be made compatible with a long-time, experimental but resolute policy of changing the social order. Changing individuals in continuing

adjustment to changing social functions—this is the bilateral though unified purpose of adult learning" (p. 104).

From a slightly different perspective, Knowles (1980b) speaks of the "mission" of adult education as satisfying the needs of individuals, institutions, and society. It is an adult educator's responsibility to "help individuals satisfy their needs and achieve their goals," the ultimate goal being "human fulfillment" (p. 27). An institution's needs, on the other hand, are to develop its constituency, improve its operational effectiveness, and establish "public understanding and involvement" (p. 35). Finally, the maintenance and progress of society requires "a crash program to retool . . . adults with the competencies required to function adequately in a condition of perpetual change" (p. 36).

A number of writers have presented what Rachal (1988) calls "content-purpose" typologies. These typologies suggest the type of content in each category, as well as "the purpose of that form of adult education" (p. 21). Interestingly, content-purpose typologies have changed little since Bryson (1936) published his typology more than sixty years ago. Table 1.1 displays seven typologies, each having four or five categories.

While Bryson's five purposes will be used as references for discussion, note that there is considerable overlap between and among typologies, regardless of any particular category's label.

"Liberal," the first purpose of adult education in Bryson's list, appears by the same label in Grattan's and Rachal's typologies, and in Darkenwald and Merriam's as "cultivation of intellect." This purpose refers to the study of the humanities and of the social and natural sciences. Knowledge is valued for its own sake, and the goal is to be an educated person. The Great Books discussion program we mentioned above would be an example of liberal adult education,

adjustment to changing social functions—this is the bilateral though unified purpose of adult learning" (p. 104).

Whether individual development or social change should be the primary purpose of adult education is a source of tension and debate even today (Galbraith and Sisco, 1992). We'll revisit this issue in subsequent chapters of this book.

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Table 1.1. Goals and Purposes of Adult Education.

Bryson (1936)	Grattan (1955)	Liveright (1968)	Darkenwald and Merriam (1982)	Apps (1985)	Rachal (1988)	Beder (1989)
Liberal	Liberal	—	Cultivation	—	Liberal	—
Occupational	Vocational	Vocational/ Occupational/ Professional	Personal and social improvement	Career development	Occupational	Facilitate change
Relational	Informational and Recreational	Self-Realization and Personal and Family	Individual self-acutalization	Personal development	Self-Help	Enhance personal growth
Remedial	—	—	—	Remedial	Compensatory	—
Political	—	Civic and social responsibility	Social transformation	Cultural criticism and social action	—	Support and maintain the good social order
—	—	—	Organizational effectiveness	—	—	Promote productivity
—	—	—	—	—	Scholastic	—

as would be courses of study in higher education or other settings that focus on humanities, social science, and the natural sciences. For example, Elderhostel and Learning-in-Retirement Institutes, both programs for older adults, include liberal arts courses as part of their curricula.

Work-related adult education, long a major thrust of the field, can be found explicitly as "occupational" (Bryson, Rachal), "vocational" (Grattan, Liveright), "career development" (Apps), or implicitly in Beder's "facilitate change" and the "personal improvement" component of Darkenwald and Merriam's scheme. This purpose of adult education is exemplified in job-preparation and skills-development courses, in on-the-job and workplace training, and in management training. Much of adult education in this arena goes by the "human resource development" (HRD) label. HRD or training is also a component of "organizational effectiveness" (Darkenwald and Merriam) and "promote productivity" (Beder).

Although not labeled as such, a third purpose in Bryson's typology also finds expression in all the others. "Relational" refers to programs in which personal growth is a priority, such as those that help develop effective relationships, provide leadership training, improve self-esteem or foster self-actualization efforts, and offer other learning related to home, family, and leisure. This is captured under Grattan's "informational" and "recreational," Liveright's "self-realization" and "personal and family," Darkenwald and Merriam's "individual self-actualization," Apps's "personal development," Rachal's "self-help," and Beder's "enhance personal growth."

Apps lists "remedial" and Rachal uses "compensatory" as functions of adult education, but this function, too, is inferred by categories in the other typologies. Examples of practice in which this purpose is inherent are adult basic education programs that help adults learn to read, high school completion programs, and some basic skills-development programs. In addition to the traditional literacy-related elements of the remedial category, Rachal includes special education for the developmentally disabled adult.

Bryson's fifth category, "political," refers to adult education activities related to citizenship responsibilities in a democracy. "In the political realm," wrote Bryson (1936), "educational activities are, first, providing for discussion of public questions; and second, adapting public documents and technical writings to help the ordinary citizen to understand" the "country's business" (p. 46). Recently, P. A. Miller (1995) proposed guidelines for adult educators to "recover" the field's civic mission. Examples of this include citizenship classes for immigrants, local public and community-based forums on issues of concern, and the National Issues Forum sponsored by the Kettering Foundation. Liveright calls this category "civic and social responsibility," and Beder means something similar with "support and maintain the good social order."

Apps and Darkenwald and Merriam present the civic function in its more radical version as "cultural criticism and social action" and "social transformation," respectively. This emphasis would include educational efforts that have a more radical agenda of empowering adults to bring about change, rather than fitting into the status quo. Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, for example, has a long history of training community activists. Beder points out, however, that "mainstream" adult educators are generally supportive of the American system, and that unlike in many developing countries, "there has not been an extensive radical tradition that has sought to eliminate the current system and to replace it with another" (1989, p. 41).

Echoing Knowles's thinking (1980b) that part of the mission of adult education is to meet institutional needs, Beder's and Darkenwald and Merriam's typologies list "promote productivity" and "organizational effectiveness," respectively, as a goal of adult education. As Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) observe: "Adults employed by public and private agencies and organizations are involved in educational programs designed to achieve the organization's goals. In the private sector, organizational and employee development programs are ultimately aimed at realizing greater

profit; in the public sector the aim is enhancing service to the public" (p. 64). Staff and employee development and training programs are commonplace examples of this purpose. Prior to the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, for example, all 38,000 employees of the Atlanta airport were given fifteen hours of training in how to better serve the Olympic visitors and future travelers.

Finally, a purpose of adult education found only in Rachal's typology is what he calls "scholastic," defined as graduate study and research in adult education. Universities and professional associations are the primary providers of programs in this area.

Several interesting observations can be made by standing back from these typologies and considering the changing sociohistorical context. First, there is the absence of any explicit moral or religious purpose, although Apps (1985) does note that this was an aim of adult education in early America. Second, personal growth and development (including liberal education) and occupational and career-related education have been constant goals of modern adult education. Third, the stability of personal and occupational goals contrasts somewhat with the political and civic-related purposes. In other words, while preserving the democratic society is still a powerful rationale for much of adult education, a more recent perspective (as in the goal of "social transformation") sees adult education as a force for challenging and changing the social structure. A fourth observation is the recognition in the more recent typologies of the growing prominence of institutions, especially business and industry, and their focus on training and human resource development.

Circling back to the beginning of this section on goals and purposes, readers might now consider what they are trying to effect through the practice they are engaged in. What is your best "match" with the purposes listed in Table 1.1? Is there a purpose to your activity that is not represented in these typologies? Is your purpose congruent with your immediate employer's or with the type of institution for which you work? Such inquiry is part of developing your philosophy of adult education (see Chapter Two).

Adult Education's Relationship to Education

The effort to describe what counts as adult education is tied up with the desire to establish a separate identity from other education. Adult education has thus tended to distance itself from K–12 and higher education and historically has had to struggle for resources, recognition, and legitimacy. It has been viewed as a marginal enterprise, expendable in times of financial exigency, something that is nice but not necessary to society's well-being. The struggle to "professionalize" adult education has been one of establishing an identity separate from that of K–12 and higher education—an identity that is distinct and powerful enough to command attention in national educational policy formation, as well as find professional space both in academia and the workplace.

While these issues are still very much present in the discourse of the field (see Chapters Four, Nine, and Eleven), some common ground has emerged within the last decade where the formal educational system and the formal sector of adult education might meet. Certainly all educators are concerned about responding in meaningful ways to the challenges posed by the global economy, by the shift to an information- and service-based society, and by fast developments in technology.

In *Beyond Education*, Thomas (1991a) discusses four challenges that require the concerted efforts of all levels of education. The first is *entry*, by which he means "strangers" entering the society, the most obvious group being children born into the society. Other entry challenges are newcomers to the host society, including immigrants, guest workers, and refugees. The second challenge is presented in terms of the life cycle *passages* of society's members. A major passage, of course, is becoming an adult, but there are other family-related (marriage, parenthood) and work-related (first job, career change, retirement) passages as well. Third, Thomas identifies *societywide changes* such as wars, epidemics, social movements, and so on that "touch everyone in a society . to varying degrees" (p. 81). The fourth

challenge is what Thomas calls *exceptions*. These are people with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities who are found in every society and whose behavior "differs from the societal norm and for whom special provision therefore must be made" (p. 85).

Another area of common ground is the current critique of formal education in both the schooling and adult education literatures. Questions are being raised in both fields as to the role of formal education in maintaining the status quo, in perpetuating a class society, and in reinforcing the present power structure that mitigates against social change (Apple, 1993; Hayes and Colin, 1994; Rubenson, 1989).

At the same time, society's *informal* and *nonformal* means of educating its youth and adults are being examined from a number of angles. Rubenson (1989) observes that nonformal education, often touted as liberatory, can also reinforce society's divisions, depending on its goals. The educative power of the family, the community, and the mass media has been critically considered by school-based writers and those with an adult perspective. Reed and Loughran (1984), in their study of learning "beyond schools," point out that "many groups of youth, as well as adults . learn more effectively in nonformal out-of-school settings" (p. 5). They identify vocational training, learning from experience, internships, and apprenticeships as common vehicles for such learning. In addition, and "perhaps more important," they write, "is the collective learning of entire groups of people as they become involved in the power structures of society" (p. 5).

The common ground that all of education shares is in figuring out the most effective way to prepare members of a society to accommodate change, and how best to realize the society's stated values and goals. That may mean learning to "fit in," or it may mean learning to challenge a social structure that does not reflect desired goals. These stances are discussed in more depth in the next chapter. Viewing learning—and indeed education—as a lifelong endeavor provides a basis for educators from all arenas to work together. At the same time, adult education need not forfeit its distinctive characteristics, many of which we have examined in this chapter.

Summary

Perhaps more than anything else, adult education in North America is characterized by its diversity of programs, clienteles, and purposes. Delineating the scope of the adult education field is thus a formidable undertaking of which this chapter is only a beginning. Here we concentrated on (1) defining adult education and related concepts, (2) identifying some of the goals and purposes of adult education, and (3) sketching out adult education's relationship to education in general. We hope that you the reader have considered where you fit in, what you think adult education is, and what the purposes of your practice are.

Implicit in the many definitions of adult education as a field of practice is a distinction between education and learning, and a recognition of what it means to be an adult. For our definitions, a focus on the *adult* learner is crucial, as is the notion that the activity is being *purposefully* educative. We discussed continuing education and lifelong learning as commonly used synonyms for adult education, and we also reviewed concepts and terminology related to its practice.

The purposes of adult education, often codified into typologies, reflect some notions of the field's aims that are held in common, as well as some that reflect changing interests and concerns. Adult education for liberal, vocational, personal growth, and remedial needs has remained constant, while its role vis-à-vis society and the press of organizations needing educated workers have shaped other purposes.

Finally, the field's relationship to education in general is historically grounded in adult education's efforts to professionalize and establish a separate identity for itself. Some people believe that adult education could benefit from being more integrally related to K–12 and higher education, and we considered areas of common interest that could lay the foundation for cooperation among K–12, higher, and adult education systems.