Adults. (2015). AE programs have established routes to employment, are associated with positive employment outcomes, and have prepared newcomers for successful societal integration (Hughes, Adriaanse, & Barnes, 2016). Conversely, when citizens are not provided with opportunities to develop basic skills, there are economic and social costs to society (e.g., Field, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Vignoles, Wolf, & Galindo-Rueda, 2003; Zhang & Palameta, 2006). During capacity building sessions, ERPAE members provided numerous accounts of the benefits of Adult Education they had witnessed firsthand in the lives of their students, reinforcing the value of their work across the region. The collective success experienced by the ERPAE in this phase of the AES reinforces the "importance of building capacity in teachers and instructors in the K-12/Adult Credit systems, to support the development of a highly skilled workforce" (Conway, Campbell, Hardt, Loat, & Sood, 2016, p. 29).

References


Acknowledgment

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In 2014 The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) announced the development of a provincial Adult Education Strategy (AES) to improve the educational outcomes of adult learners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014). The AES highlighted the importance of school board collaboration and regional school board partnerships in the provision of a range of quality programs and services to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. To work towards implementation of the AES, the OME invested up to three years of funding in regional school board partnerships. During the first year, partnerships were required to develop a multi-year strategic plan and conduct an environmental scan of the adult education services provided in their region. The Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education (ERPAE) is one of seven regional partnerships that participated in this process. As part of their strategic plan, the ERPAE committed to building capacity in its members across nine school boards during its second year in operation. This research monograph describes how capacity in Adult Education (AE) was developed by the ERPAE and it identifies the capacity that was built among its members. The need for ongoing capacity development in AE is also addressed in light of the vital role it plays in the lives of adults and society.
What Capacity Was Built in ERPAE Members?

To document the capacity that was built in ERPAE members, researchers asked members to complete an online survey and take part in an individual interview. Qualitative survey and interview responses were analyzed thematically to identify what capacity had been built in ERPAE members. Analyses revealed three main areas where capacity development had occurred: Knowledge of Adult Education, Adult Education Roles, and Adult Education Practices.

Examples of ERPAE member capacity development are reported by these three main areas (see Table 1).

Knowledge of Adult Education: ERPAE members reported increased knowledge of AE in terms of the field in general, Ontario AE Ministry initiatives and directives, and AE programs in the eastern region. In addition, ERPAE members became aware of urban/rural differences in the region and AE challenges faced by different boards in the partnership. Lastly, the value of acting on opportunities for regional collaboration was recognized by the partnership.

Adult Education Practices: According to ERPAE members, capacity building sessions provided them with the opportunity to develop their board’s AE programs. It also led them to improve key AE practices, like the consistent application of PLAR, the development of guidance best practices, optimizing AE funding registers, building strong supports (e.g., guidance and special education) in all programs, increased collaboration between credit and non-credit AE programs to support the needs of diverse adult learners, and working together as a region to develop capacity and enact change.

Table 1. Adult Education Capacity Development Reported by ERPAE Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Reported by Participants</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE OF ADULT EDUCATION</th>
<th>ADULT EDUCATION ROLES</th>
<th>ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICES</th>
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<td>Greater understanding of AE as a field, Ontario AE Ministry initiatives and directives, and AE programs in the region</td>
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<td>Opportunity to develop the board’s AE program (e.g., identify gaps and strategies to overcome them)</td>
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<td>Understanding of the urban/rural differences in the region and challenges faced by different boards (e.g., clientele, geography, funding, staffing)</td>
<td>Confidence in and understanding of one’s role in AE</td>
<td>Consistent application of PLAR Guidance best practices</td>
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<td>The value of acting on opportunities for regional collaboration</td>
<td>Understanding how the work of the AE team supports the goals of adult learners, the district school board, and the larger community</td>
<td>Optimizing the use of funding registers Developing strong supports in all AE programs (e.g., guidance and special education)</td>
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In Summary

The continuous learning approach and collaborative structure of ERPAE capacity building sessions (CBSs) enabled members to develop in relation to the knowledge of AE, confidence in and understanding of AE roles, and application of effective AE practices. Ultimately, the project led to:

- a growing capacity across the group to articulate, describe, and adopt effective practices within the different programs that form Adult Education;
- members’ increased understanding of the roles and responsibilities of AE staff, DSB staff, and community agencies; and
- recognition of the importance of district school board, regional, and community agency collaboration to support the diverse needs of adult learners.

CBSs were a successful means of professional development, but ongoing efforts are needed to develop capacity and improve the quality of AE in Ontario, across Canada, and internationally, given the wide-ranging benefits it has in the lives of adults and society. For example, Adult Education has been shown to make a positive impact in: activating citizens to volunteer, vote, and take functional roles in society (OECD, 2006). Similarly, the acquisition of basic skills enables adults to adopt healthier lifestyles, contribute to the creation of fairer societies, and help their community, region, and nation create economic growth (European Association for the Education of
What Capacity Was Built in ERPAE Members?

The ERPAE used a unique approach to capacity building marked by continuous learning and a collaborative structure. While most professional development is often limited to one- or two-day learning events, the ERPAE took a continuous learning approach to capacity building that involved four sets of two-day sessions spread out over the course of a school year (i.e., November, December, February, March). These capacity building sessions (CBSs) enabled members to engage with complex issues in Adult Education in a sustained manner and cultivate relationships with ERPAE members, including colleagues from their own school board. Learning from CBSs was intended to set the groundwork for the development and piloting of innovative practices in Adult Education by each ERPAE school board.

In order to facilitate learning from within the region, study groups related to each of the four key AES mandates (i.e., flexible delivery; intake, assessment, and referral; Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR); guidance, career counselling, and pathway planning) and a fifth regionally identified area (i.e., community and region-wide awareness) were established with representation from each school board. At the onset of study groups, members learned from other regions and experts in the province during CBSs. Topics and guest speakers included:

- PLAR, James Michaud, Coordinator of NERPAE
- Adult Education Programs and Flexible Delivery, Simcoe County DSB
- CESBA, Bernadette Beaupre, Executive Director of CESBA
- Adult Education Marketing, Shelley Mayer, President of RAMP
- PLAR, Bonnie Kennedy, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment
- Championing and Positioning Your District School Board, Eleanor Newman, Executive Director of EOSDN

ERPAE members were given ample opportunity to learn about AE from within and outside the region during capacity building sessions. The next section discusses the type of capacity that was built in ERPAE members as a result of their participation in CBSs.

Knowledge of Adult Education: ERPAE members reported increased knowledge of AE in terms of the field in general, Ontario AE Ministry initiatives and directives, and AE programs in the eastern region. In addition, ERPAE members became aware of urban/rural differences in the region and AE challenges faced by different boards in the partnership. Lastly, the value of acting on opportunities for regional collaboration was recognized by the partnership.

Adult Education Roles: With respect to Adult Education roles, members shared strategies for developing a culture of care and building confidence in adult learners. Some members reported that capacity building sessions fostered confidence in their role as an AE educator. Moreover, members developed an understanding of how the AE team supports the goals of adult learners, the district school board, and the larger community.

Adult Education Practices: According to ERPAE members, capacity building sessions provided them with the opportunity to develop their board’s AE programs. It also led them to improve key AE practices, like the consistent application of PLAR, the development of guidance best practices, optimizing AE funding registers, building strong supports (e.g., guidance and special education) in all programs, increased collaboration between credit and non-credit AE programs to support the needs of diverse adult learners, and working together as a region to develop capacity and enact change.

In Summary

The continuous learning approach and collaborative structure of ERPAE capacity building sessions (CBSs) enabled members to develop in relation to the four key AES mandates of Adult Education, Adult Education Roles, and Adult Education Practices.

Examples of ERPAE member capacity development are reported by these three main areas (see Table 1).

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<td>Developing strong supports in all AE programs (e.g., guidance and special education)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using marketing strategies and creating a positive brand for AE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Increased collaboration between credit and non-credit AE programs to support the needs of diverse adult learners</td>
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CBSEs were a successful means of professional development, but ongoing efforts are needed to develop capacity and improve the quality of AE in Ontario, across Canada, and internationally, given the wide-ranging benefits it has in the lives of adults and society. For example, Adult Education has been shown to make a positive impact in activating citizens to volunteer, vote, and take functional roles in society (OECD, 2006). Similarly, the acquisition of basic skills enables adults to adopt healthier lifestyles, contribute to the creation of fairer societies, and help their community, region, and nation create economic growth (European Association for the Education of
Capacity Building in Adult Education: Sharing and Developing Best Practices in Eastern Ontario

Dr. Sandy Youmans and Dr. Lorraine Godden, Queen’s University

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