

The article indicates that in spite of various definitions of and approaches to community education, which have led to some confusion of what it is or what it might become, this rather new educational undertaking has stirred considerable enthusiasm among a number of people. The authors describe a project in a sparsely settled area of Northern Ontario - its history and significant meaningful growth including the reasons why such growth occurred. They also point out certain benefits that can accrue to the sponsoring agencies involved in community education and indicate in what directions the particular program which they have studied is heading.

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Continuing Education — From Smooth Rock Falls to Opatika

Community Education — Enthusiasm and Confusion

Not unlike other educational concepts, the idea of community education has stirred considerable enthusiasm among many people. The prospect of encouraging and facilitating participation in the educational enterprise from all corners of the community is just cause for enthusiasm. At the same time there is some cause for perplexity, perhaps even uneasiness, with the realization that there are varied means of involvement, some more effective, appropriate and innovative than others. Perhaps this uneasiness can be somewhat allayed with the assurance that the ideal community education model has yet to be implemented, and with the realization that one board's approach to continuing education, though perhaps significantly different from another jurisdiction's model, is possibly quite appropriate for a particular area. For an interesting and very reasonable account of what community education is to different educators, read "The Definition Issue", *The NCSEA News*, May, 1971.

The Kapuskasing Board of Education Model: Its History and Growth

There is a form of community education that is flourishing within the jurisdiction of the Kapuskasing Board of Education. As it exists, it is admittedly somewhat less than Utopian. As it has been developed and continues to grow, it no doubt shares many common characteristics with other approaches, but it also has features which are unique.

The Kapuskasing Board of Education serves a population of approximately 20,000, inhabiting a string of Northern Ontario communities along Highway 11, the major centre being the town of Kapuskasing with a population of 12,700. The area is predominantly bilingual with approximately 40 percent of the population unilingual English, the preponderance of whom reside in Kapuskasing and Smooth Rock Falls (population about 2,500). Perhaps 10 percent of the population is unilingual French, inhabiting the smaller outlying communities.

Since 1969, when the present jurisdiction was created, there has been an increasing awareness of the variety of educational, recreational and cultural needs, some common to all, others peculiar to some of the respective communities served

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by the Kapuskasing Board of Education. The existing means of attempting to meet those needs was the old Board - sponsored night school programs which had all but disappeared with the arrival of a community college of applied arts and technology extension department which rapidly developed a relatively wide range of interest courses as well as a limited number of upgrading courses, almost exclusively offered in the town of Kapuskasing, and with very few exceptions, in the English language.

During 1973-74, a new philosophy was articulated by the Kapuskasing Board of Education, revitalizing the remnants of the old program with more than just a new name, the Continuing Education Program or, as it is known to the majority of the area's population, l'Education Permanente. The new philosophy was expressed in the Board's commitment to offer all the physical, economic, and human resources at its disposal to provide any educationally viable course or activity to any group of 12 or more people who could be identified as having a common interest or need anywhere within the Board's jurisdiction. Special dispensation for grade 13 subjects and the conversational French and English classes allowed for a minimum of 6 students as long as an overall pupil/teacher ratio of 14 students to one teacher could be maintained. To provide leadership for the Continuing Education Program, the Board, in the spring of 1974, named four part-time special assistants and a secretary to replace the one Night School Principal then in charge. By April of 1975, both a full-time coordinator and secretary were required to maintain the program which had expanded dramatically and to implement the required innovative approaches.

The development and growth of the Board's Continuing Education Program has been substantial. For example, the number of classes offered from 1972-73 to 1974-75 had increased from 13 to 186. Similarly, during the same period the number of students registered had increased from 218 to 2816! Data collected from June 1975 indicates that the program has expanded to the point that by December 1975 more than 4200 were registered in more than 250 classes. Programs vary from secondary school academic offerings to general interest courses ranging from cabinet making to yoga.

Factors Influencing Positive Growth and Development

The current success of the Program can be attributed to certain readily identifiable characteristics. Not only has the educational leadership improved, but prominent community leaders have lent their support. The number of courses is now over 50, with the response overwhelmingly in the non-credit interest course area. Despite the trend away from credit courses, documented as a national phenomenon in the January 1975 bulletin issued by Statistics Canada, it is hoped that the Ontario Ministry of Education Circular HSI 1975-76, 1976-77 which facilitates the acquisition of a Secondary School Graduation Diploma, will attract an increased number of mature students who may wish to earn a high school diploma. Already in 1974-75, a limited but encouraging response to local advertisements has been realized.

The popularity of non-credit interest courses, however, has enabled the program to be staffed by instructors who, although often uncertified teachers, have proved to be competent and successful. Whenever possible, an instructor is recruited within his/her own community.

This is usually more easily accomplished in craft-type courses and activities which require relatively unsophisticated equipment or facilities. Mileage allowances

are available to those instructors who must travel to the outlying communities. As well, to assist communities in their quest to recruit their own local instructors, a professional development fund has been budgeted and professional development activities will be arranged when necessary.

The trend toward non-credit courses has also permitted unlimited flexibility in course length. Where the traditional credit course has requirements with respect to hours of instruction, the length of the non-credit course can be altered to suit the needs and interests of the students. While a limited number of courses are as long as 100 hours, the majority have been shortened to as few as 9 or 10 hours with very favourable effects on attendance.

The relatively low cost of tuition has also been a contributing factor, not because the cost per hour has been reduced, but because the number of instructional hours per course has been substantially reduced in many cases. With the exception of Driver Education, tuition has been set at 26¢ per instructional hour.

The significant amount of cooperation between the board and numerous agencies has contributed immensely to the growth and development of the program.

Community Participation as of June, 1975

As the following figures (Table 1) demonstrate, community participation is substantial, ranging from a low of 7.08 per cent to a high of 21.69 per cent:

TABLE 1

<i>Community</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>No. of Classes</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>	<i>% of Participants by Community</i>
Kapuskasing	12,700	99	68	31	1,630	12.83
Moonbeam	1,420	23	1	22	308	21.69
Fauquier/	960	9	0	9	140	
Strickland		2	0	2	29	17.60
Smooth Rock Falls	2,450	36	21	15	511	20.86
Opasatika	1,200	7	0	7	85	7.08
Val Rita/	1,320	8	0	8	83	
Harty		2	0	2	30	8.57
TOTALS	20,050	186	90	96	2,816	14.04 (average)

Amount of community participation depends on several factors, including the quality of the available instructors as perceived by the potential student clientele; the duration and perhaps the scheduling of the courses with respect to time of year and day as well as nights of the week; the socio-economic level of the community; the degree of organized social and recreational activities in a particular town or village, and so on.

Cooperation with other Agencies

Cooperation with other agencies has become essential to the operation of the program. Although all communities are served by the Kapuskasing Board of Ed-

ucation, it is only in the communities of Kapuskasing and Smooth Rock Falls that the Board operates schools. To be able to offer almost 50 per cent of the classes in the outlying areas (mainly in the French language) has necessitated the assistance of not only the Kapuskasing District Roman Catholic Separate School (RCSS) Board which operates schools in all communities, but various parishes, community centres and private homes.

Beginning in September 1975, a cooperative arrangement with the Kapuskasing District RCSS Board provided five courses to some seventy adults in Smooth Rock Falls. These classes were given in a French language separate school during the regular school day with the Kapuskasing Board of Education — Continuing Education Program providing some planning, coordination, instruction and supervision.

The emphasis on cooperation has in fact become a major thrust of the Continuing Education Program. A local French cultural centre has co-sponsored a variety of activities with the assistance of the Board. During the summer of 1975, coordination of an Opportunities for Youth (OFY) sponsored project with the cooperation of the Ministry of Natural Resources permitted both canoe instruction and the construction of a log cabin outdoor centre in a wilderness setting forty miles from Kapuskasing. A special effort is being made as well to provide appropriate activities to the senior members of the jurisdiction with free tuition for all programs. This would involve some coordinating with the respective Golden Age organizations as well as the institutions which provide accomodation for the elderly.

Following the lead of the Board, the Municipal council for the town of Kapuskasing approved the formation of a liaison committee to study the utilization of existing facilities within this municipality. Representatives named by the Town, the Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Board respectively have taken an inventory of the physical resources available for community use. Already a limited number of activities have been co-sponsored by the Board and the recreation department in Smooth Rock Falls. This cooperative approach will be explored with other social agencies such as family services.

Potential Benefits of Continuing Education

The potential benefits of the program in question can be examined from at least two perspectives, the students' and the Board's, including other sponsoring agencies. With regard to students, most programs provide the following possibilities:

First, there is the possibility for the "development of self". Almost everyone has a great interest in some topic which he may wish to study in depth. Self-development may be pursued in a formal sense: students accumulate a variety of credits which can lead to a Secondary School Graduation Diploma or admission to a college or university; alternatively, self-development can be achieved in a more informal manner: pupils select and follow non-credit courses which relate to their area of interest. Generally speaking it is possible to be registered in both credit and non-credit courses.

Second, academic upgrading can lead to promotions, or in many cases, a greater sense of security to the additional confidence required of individuals in seeking other posts.

Third, and perhaps most important among homemakers, particularly in isolated areas, registration in a continuing education program provides a social outlet. Following a course can be a highly satisfying social experience: friendships are

developed with positive relationships continuing after the termination of the course.

Fourth, continuing education programs fulfil a human need — the desire to learn. Perhaps our modern day media have made their impact on our citizenry; more and more people are turning to education in an attempt to get more out of life, to keep up with rapid change. Among many adults, who have sons and daughters and other relatives with considerable formal education, there appears to be a strong desire to narrow the generation gap by following courses.

Fifth, a fair number of people today appear to have considerable leisure time at their disposal. The Continuing Education Program is one meaningful way of filling this time.

As for sponsoring agencies, continuing education programs provide the following benefits:

First, the identity of a particular agency or of a Board is more firmly established. Somewhat surprisingly, since the formation of larger units of educational administration in 1969, there are still large numbers of taxpayers who know very little about the different functions of a board of education. Further, there is a host of social agencies which, though providing valuable services in the past, were relatively unknown. The participation of these organizations in the Continuing Education Program has expanded community awareness of them and of their functions.

Second, as the Board or a particular agency's identity is established, people who participate in continuing education programs appear to develop a greater appreciation of the role of the Board and/or of the agency.

Third, as appreciation grows, there appears to be less resistance to paying for the high cost of education and other services since there is a better understanding of why one is paying. It would also seem that various cooperating community agencies receive more consideration from their supporters.

Fourth, as individuals become more involved in continuing education programs, there is some evidence that this interest extends to other areas of educational enterprise. Stated more simply, individuals become more inclined to question educational practice; they attempt to be more constructively critical and to participate more meaningfully in the system.

Fifth, continuing education programs can ease somewhat the economic burden of boards of education. At this point, it must be stressed that these programs are not money making ventures. Because of present Ontario Ministry of Education grant regulations and guidelines, continuing education programs do permit boards of education to legally spend more for the total educational operation. This can be a meaningful and helpful benefit under certain conditions. However, continuing education programs should not exist nor be continued simply to permit additional spending for regular day school programs. Continuing education must serve educational and social goals rather than an economic one.

Sixth, because the continuing education grants are similar to those of a secondary day school operation, and because educational costs are less, this type of educational enterprise is relatively less expensive.

Seventh, certain organizations would probably be quite unable to sponsor particular programs if it were not for the assistance which can be given by boards

of education; the converse is also true. More people benefit in more meaningful ways because of the cooperative spirit which is developed through cooperative ventures.

Future Trends in Continuing Education

1. The coordinator, trustees and other interested parties will be examining carefully the present foci of the program. How well is the program meeting the educational needs of its citizens? Should summer school courses, both credit and non-credit, become part of the total continuing education operation? What should or could be changed to assist more people? What is lacking?
2. Is tuition a positive or negative influence on the Program? A number of boards charge no tuition and argue that this is a positive development because more people participate. Other boards who insist upon tuition fees believe that not only is the monetary contribution important to the operation of the program, but that people do not expect something for nothing, that paying tuition fees requires greater commitment on the part of the student, etc. The above difference of opinion must be resolved. Certainly, tuition fees cause problems: large families with limited disposable incomes whose members might benefit considerably from continuing education courses may be deprived of the service; secondary school students may be unwilling to pursue courses which exist out of their formal educational context in spite of the fact that there may be important and viable programs available to them and that boards could receive more grants if they do so.
3. New programs such as intensive, daily, short-term immersion courses in French and in English will be piloted soon. Programs for mentally handicapped individuals are presently being studied and will be implemented in the near future.
4. Greater effort will be directed towards attracting adults who possess limited formal education and who display a certain apprehension towards formal educational programs. There seems to be a sizeable number of people who "would like to come to school" but who are afraid to do so for a host of reasons, and these people must be reached.
5. An investigation is underway to determine the feasibility of providing "equipment banks" for specified periods of time in various communities where there is a lack of facilities. The Continuing Education Program Ad Hoc Committee is now looking into the possibility of renting a number of typewriters and sewing machines for placement, in communities where this equipment is unavailable. Thus, students would not be required to come to the "city" to follow certain courses and, obviously, the Board would have the opportunity to offer more courses in deprived communities.
6. Another idea which has just been implemented and which will be pursued further is the "lecture series". Experts on various issues are invited to various communities to discuss topics of interest to the local population. To date, two lectures have been organized: one dealing with pre-school education; another focussing upon mental retardation.
7. Although the Board permits and encourages access to the schools and its facilities, it is primarily adults who use Board facilities in these programs. Principals are developing programs whereby both adults and regular day school students will be encouraged to use the facilities more extensively.

8. Evaluation of personnel and programs has been undertaken and more emphasis will be placed upon this aspect of the Program. Instruments are being designed to assess both teacher and course effectiveness.

Conclusion

Among the many recommendations of the Faure Report on world educational opportunities, it is significant, and certainly not surprising, that so much emphasis is placed on what is termed "lifelong education" and that ". . . lifelong education is proposed as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both the developed and developing countries" (p. 182). Continuing education is not, as some people would argue, a concept which is here today and will be gone tomorrow. Continuing education is exciting; it is a challenge — one which must be met, one which departs considerably from the traditional concept of education but which is nevertheless just as important.

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RESUME

Cet article montre qu'une entreprise éducative qui vise à la communauté entière, bien qu'elle soit assez récente, a été reçue avec enthousiasme par un certain nombre de personnes, malgré le fait que les définitions diverses et les différentes manières d'aborder l'idée ont créé une confusion de ce qu'elle est ou ce qu'elle pourrait devenir. Les auteurs décrivent un projet dans une région peu habitée du nord de l'Ontario — son histoire et son développement significatif et les raisons qui expliquent un tel développement. Ils signalent également certains avantages qui puissent revenir aux agences garantes, et indiquent sur quelle ligne mène le programme particulier étudié.