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# Rationale for the International Society for Comparative Adult Education Article on Comparative Inquiry Stages

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Many adult educators are trapped in the local essence and significance of what they do. While other adult educators transcend the local, recognizing it is a common pattern experienced more widely, even globally. In this paper we argue for making connections between the local and the global as adult learners pursue issues and conditions that are their own, but also experienced in other countries

Such connections have become increasingly apparent, as educators recognize that many of the topics that adult learners pursue are greatly influenced by economic, political, health, migration, and opportunity conditions in their own and other countries.

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: in this hybrid article, as in the materials for our June 3 session (“Comparative Adult Education 2021” ISCAE), participants/readers could use the digital link to the three examples of publication summaries (Gibson, distance learning; Pratt, teaching perspectives; Knox, program coordination). Printed books can also be accessible from ISCAE related University libraries; or from publishers of the three books.

The 2010 American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) decennial Handbook (Kasworm et al., 2010) chapters 37–40 on future directions in a global context, and the three editors' conclusions on looking back, looking forward emphasize why transcendent local educators should understand global issues related to their program initiatives and results. In the 2020 decennial Handbook (Rocco et al., 2020), the concluding contemporary issues section [chapters 36–46, conclusions and epilogue] provide a similar perspective on future directions related to combinations of local program opportunities and international connections.

The topic and format of our June 3, 2021, interactive session 4 on stages of international comparative inquiry, illustrate this relationship. The International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE), (<http://www.iscae.org/>), virtual preconference on comparing adult education in an age of populisms, explored use of technology to understand connections among global and local comparative inquiry and performance. Participants in the pre-conference interactions, had access to a website before, during, and after the session, which provided an overview rationale and three summaries of international comparative adult education publications: Gibson (Burge et al., 2011) distance-learning; Pratt (Pratt et al., 2016) teaching perspectives; Knox (1993), program coordination. All three topics are important for enhancing learning and performance.

The article sections are about comparative context, learning cascades, relevant publications, and future directions.

## Context

The ISCAE pre-conference theme about an age of populisms refers to the turbulence that many American educators of adults are confronting during the current health, economic, and opportunity transition, which George Packer analysed in the article on four competing U.S. national visions, in the July/August 2021 Atlantic (Packer, 2021). Educators in other countries confront similar national issues about fragmentation.

Can it be our mission to engage program participants and stakeholders toward reconciliation in the next decade or more? In North America and beyond, much may depend on our regional collaborations as educators of adults after decades of fragmentation into specialized professional associations.

The three books for the ISCAE session contained information about international experience by Knox, Gibson, and Pratt. Simone Conceição's website (<https://scoc-consulting.com>) contains the posting of this digital article. She was co-editor of the Compendium, part of the June 3 ISCAE session, and has over

25 years professional experience in distance teaching and learning, training, technology, design, evaluation, and staff development, with experience in the United States, Chile, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Turkey, and China.

As mentioned during our ISCAE June 3 session discussion, an example of a local stage of international comparative inquiry, was a recent virtual Forum on information literacy that was conducted with a dozen scholars, journalists, and educators. A summary update about this Forum is available in our Adult Learning Exchange, as an interactive virtual community, (<https://scoc-consulting.com/virtual-community>), or discussion with interested colleagues. (<https://ale-virtual-community-infoliteracy.blogspot.com/>)

### Cascades

A cascade of learning process was also mentioned during our June 3 session discussion, as a beneficial concept related to our rationale for hybrid local stages of comparative inquiry. Publications, biographies, and memoirs in recent decades have revealed the importance of mentors and role models for excellent education of adults. Exemplary educators transcend making arrangements by using major publications and examples from practice. Our multidisciplinary field has become fragmented in specialized associations, in spite of efforts to encourage interaction among partner associations. Deliberation among educators from members in several multi-disciplinary associations, to confront local implications of global issues, may provide a path to greater solidarity and personal quality of life.

### Publications

Local and regional councils, roundtables, and joint conferences have become infrequent. Open access and website publications are especially valuable, as recent educators of adults may rely on digitized periodicals and hybrid books. Some practitioners may be aware of classic publications since the 2017 publication of the international Compendium (Knox et al., 2017), by Stylus joint publication with AAACE. Use of the AAACE Learning Exchange with members of partner associations, and articles such as the series of 2019 Adult Learning quarterly articles on future reflections (Brooks et al., 2019), have encouraged educators to benefit from both print and digital publications.

During the June 3 ISCAE session discussion, a question was asked about trends regarding CPAE graduate programs, and the importance of strategic planning, such as, the 1973 AEA publication about development of adult education

graduate programs (AEA-1973). This comparative education report was prepared by members of the CPAE committee on program initiation and revision. The report addressed issues related to both past trends and future directions.

Another example was about major print publications that reflect the evolving legacy of concepts and resources available to colleagues. A current example is the forthcoming ISCAE book on essential readings in international and comparative adult education (Reischmann, in press). Earlier examples include Cy Houle's book on *The Literature of Adult Education* (Houle, 1992); Cy Houle's 1980 continuing learning in the professions (Houle, 1980); Ron Cervero's 1988 book on professional education (Cervero, 1988), and the Knox 2016 book on *Improving Professional Learning* (Knox, 2016), with a bibliographic essay on important recent publications. Such publications use comparative analysis as part of their analysis.

### Future Directions

Recent digitized and accessible publications that embrace international comparative analysis, give attention to global and local societal trends and future directions. Examples include the four volume/80 article *Stylus International Compendium on Mapping the Field of Adult and Continuing Education* (<https://sites.google.com/site/icacecompendium/home>), (Knox et al., 2017). Topics and authors address international issues, some using comparative analysis. The article in the Knox-Houle Collection (<https://scoc-consulting.com/knoxhoule-collection>), entitled *Enhancing proficiency, praxis and performance*, includes print and digital publications from several decades. The brief forum *JCEHP reflections on CME Congress 2012* (Knox, 2012), includes conference participants' comments and session topics that address global perspectives on future directions. The book *A Paradigm of Care* (Stake & Visse, 2021), is a rationale about desirable directions by educators in health, teaching and other professions. The book *Designing Online Learning Experiences* (Conceição & Howles, 2021) is another example of the various ways in which international comparative analysis can serve local educators and residents in the region.

Each of the publications cited in this article contains implications for future directions. In addition, following are principles and guidelines that apply to this rationale for comparative inquiry that speaks to local as well as global concerns:

1. Be responsive to educators from various roles (teachers, health occupations, counsellors, coordinators, and journalists);
2. Discover relevant publications and people for planning, conducting, reporting, process, and comparative conclusions;

3. Recognize systemic and accessible connections among global, national, regional, and local influences on people, groups, and communities;
4. Include ongoing evaluation and inquiry feedback to share results with program participants and other stakeholders;
5. Consider context, including cross-case analysis of situational and societal influences from the past and evolving present;
6. Use a future-oriented, collaborative planning and implementation process, if you want mutually beneficial exchanges, purposes, process, and locally usable results.

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