

# **Accountability and the Public Trust: Restoring the Balance**

**An annotated bibliography**

**by**



**The Centre for Literacy of Quebec**

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## **PREFACE**

This bibliography was compiled for the 2006 Summer Institute at The Centre for Literacy - *Accountability and Public Trust: Restoring the Balance*. The selections include lectures, research studies, policy papers and government documents that describe and analyze recent concepts of accountability in the context of government funding in the non-profit sector in several countries. They look at issues of assessment and accountability in the broad field of education and more narrowly in the fields of adult literacy and adult basic education. Each section has been arranged in chronological order to reflect the evolution of ideas over the past two decades. Although far from exhaustive, the selected entries offer a set of essential readings on the topic and a point of entry for further research.

The references, from Canada and a number of other countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, show the experience of accountability in the different countries to be remarkably similar. Put together, the references and annotations also form a narrative.

Research for this bibliography included thorough searches of: the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD); the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL); the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) database; National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL); the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC); The Centre for Literacy resource collection; and the web sites of numerous national/international agencies with an acknowledged stake in literacy and lifelong learning. Further recommendations were contributed by participants at the Summer Institute.

Search words used across platforms included: accountability; assessment; adult education; adult literacy; non-profit; audit; high-stakes testing.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This bibliography was prepared by Paul Beaulieu, librarian/researcher at The Centre for Literacy, and edited by fellow staff members. Most annotations were written by the researcher [PB]; a few are abridged or edited versions of existing abstracts. The source is identified in square brackets.

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## REFERENCES

### *Concepts of Accountability*

**Power, M. (1999).** *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

This book attempts to account for the proliferation of audits since the early 1980s in the United Kingdom and North America. Originally understood as a verification of financial statements, audit now applies to medical audits, technology audits, value for money audits, environmental audits, quality audits, teaching audits, and more. The author argues that the rise of auditing has its roots in political demands for accountability and control. There is now a whole industry devoted to checking up on people. But the issues of trust that lead to all this auditing also apply to the auditing process. The author questions the manner in which audits produce assurance and accountability. Audits can end up imposing values on the audited organization that are in conflict with the organization's own values or mandate. [PB]

**O'Neill, O. (Ed.). (2002).** *A Question of Trust: The BBC Reith Lectures 2002.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This book, the text of O'Neill's 2002 Reith Lecture, brings a philosopher's perspective to the issue of declining trust in public institutions, and whether demand for greater accountability of these institutions counters or actually feeds into this trend. O'Neill argues that demands for accountability stem from a culture of suspicion that is disseminated through streams of media and exploited by various groups for political purposes. The public may demand or be seen to demand tighter controls on public institutions to ensure that they do what they supposedly cannot otherwise be trusted to do. But O'Neill argues that in many cases such controls are counter-productive: someone trying to serve the public must devote inordinate amounts of time and energy to "being accountable" - time and energy that thereby does not go into serving the public. [PB]

**Stein, J. (2002).** *The Cult of Efficiency.* (CBC Massey Lectures Series) Toronto, ON: Anansi Press.

In the 2001 Massey Lectures, the author critically examines the ideology whereby the good of public services such as health care and education comes to be defined mainly in terms of "efficiency". She argues that while accountability for such public services is needed, accountability mechanisms too often measure effectiveness in narrow, purely quantitative ways, and ignores the ways in which efficiency is not necessarily synonymous with quality. The demand for efficiency can in fact be a cloak for political agendas. The author discusses how the public might hold governments and public service providers genuinely accountable, as well as what results they should account for, and how. [PB]

**Stein, J. (2002). Bad Translation or Double Standard? Productivity and Accountability across the Private, Public and Voluntary Sectors. *The Review of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, Volume 2.**

Conventional wisdom in public policy dictates that public services should be delivered as efficiently as possible. No one would speak in favour of wasting money. However, in the name of maximizing productivity, the public and voluntary sectors have adopted, or been made to adopt, an understanding of productivity that is considerably narrower than that of the private sector. This narrow understanding fails to take account of the realities of service delivery in the public and voluntary sectors, thus undermining their effectiveness. When accountability is defined by narrow concepts of efficiency, the concept of accountability is itself narrowed and emptied of meaning. True accountability is complex and many-sided. [PB]

## *Accountability Frameworks: Government and Non-Profits*

### **Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector. (1999).**

***Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector. Voluntary Sector Roundtable. Retrieved May 2006 from <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/>.***

This is the final report of the Panel, established in October 1997 by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable to review current accountability practices within the voluntary sector, develop proposed guidelines and practices to promote accountability within the sector, and lead a broad consultation on these proposals. The report notes the challenges to non-profits posed by growing demands for accountability, and makes recommendations to promote effective governance and accountability within the sector. It outlines an approach that combines regulation and self-regulation, based in part on the idea that the answer to gaps in accountability is better regulation, not necessarily more. The report also notes the need to build capacity in organizations to enable them to better meet the challenge of accountability. [PB]

### **Kroeger, A. (2000). *Commentary - The HRD Affair: Reflections on Accountability in Government*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Policy Research Networks. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://www.cprn.com/>.**

In a speech to the Canadian Club on December 12, 2000, the author argues that the HRD scandal was blown out of proportion and contributed to an undesirable tightening of controls over government grants and contributions to organizations. He recounts how, in March 1998, the Human Resources Department (HRD, the precursor to HRSDC) initiated an audit of selected grants and contributions because of concern about the effects of cuts in the mid-1990's on their ability to manage these programs. This audit turned up numerous examples of lax project monitoring by officials. Kroeger notes that while inadequate documentation and loose financial controls increase the likelihood of abuse, it does not necessarily mean that widespread abuse has in fact taken place. In this case, there was little evidence of actual wrongdoing by Department officials or by the organizations receiving funds. While officials may have made mistakes of discretion and flexibility, it is lamentable that the reaction to this shortcoming was a return to rigid bureaucratization. [PB]

### **Canada. Voluntary Sector Task Force. (2001). *An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*. Ottawa, ON: Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat. Retrieved May 2006 from <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/>.**

An accord between the Government of Canada and representatives of the voluntary sector meant to establish a basis of understanding between non-profit organizations and the Government of Canada in their mutual dealings, this document was written by a working group (the Joint Accord Table) of representatives from the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. They heard from Canadians during consultations across the country in the summer and fall of 2001. Both sides make commitments. Government commitments include: To recognize and consider the implications of its legislation, regulations, policies and programs on voluntary sector organizations; to recognize its need to engage the voluntary

sector in open, informed and sustained dialogue in order that the sector may contribute its experience, expertise, knowledge, and ideas in developing better public policies and in the design and delivery of programs; and to address the issue of ministerial responsibility for the continued development of the relationship with the voluntary sector. [PB]

**Phillips, S. and Levasseur, K. (2004). The snakes and ladders of accountability: Contradictions between contracting and collaboration for Canada's voluntary sector. *Canadian Public Administration*, v. 47, no. 4 (Winter 2004). Toronto ON: Institute of Public Administration of Canada.**

Governing in Canada is in transition between administrative models - from "new public management", with its contracting culture and associated accountability regime, towards a model of horizontal "governance" that emphasizes collaboration with a variety of non-governmental actors. The current accountability frameworks which are part and parcel of "new public management", were given a new impetus by the HRD scandal of 2000. This article finds that their impact on voluntary organizations has been significant and overwhelmingly negative, imposing direct financial costs on voluntary organizations and stifling innovation. However, there is also a trend toward collaborative "governance" with non-profits which contradicts the controlling impulses embodied in current accountability frameworks. Looking at the Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector and its Code of Good Practice on Funding as examples of this collaborative philosophy, the authors consider whether they might mitigate the negative effects of the accountability measures. [Publication Abstract]

**Abelson, J. and Gauvin, F-P- in collaboration with Mary Pat MacKinnon and Judy Watling. (2004). *Transparency, Trust and Citizen Engagement: What Canadians Are Saying about Accountability*. CPRN Research Report P-05. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Public Research Networks. Retrieved August 2006 from <http://www.cprn.org/>.**

Based on public dialogues on the question of accountability, this report offers insight into public attitudes behind the tightening of accountability mechanisms for public funding of programs and services. Among other things, it reports widespread popular distrust of government management of their tax dollars, and demand for greater government accountability. Many participants in the dialogues said that they would be willing to pay more taxes for public services, on condition that there were clear mechanisms in place to ensure that money actually improved the services in question. [PB]

**Capgemini. (2004). *Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) Final Report. Program Management Review: Grants & Contributions*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://www.sdc.gc.ca/>.**

This is the final report stemming from a review of HRSDC programs in the wake of a public scandal about alleged mismanagement. The report highlights a number of problems with the administration of HRSDC programs, among them levels of financial control disproportionate to the level of risk which caused department employees to focus on monitoring finances, and to pay insufficient attention to project results. [PB]



**Aucoin, P. and Jarvis, M.D. (2005). *Modernizing Government Accountability*. Ottawa, ON.: Canadian School of Public Service. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://www.myschool-monecole.gc.ca/>.**

This addresses the issue of political accountability - how government and people within it can be held accountable. The authors note that within the Canadian government virtually all those to whom an account is due are themselves accountable to someone higher up in the hierarchy, so that there can be said to be a chain of political accountability. This "chain" is not straightforward, however, given the complexities of our parliamentary and bureaucratic system. The authors look into the current mechanisms of political accountability and their limitations, and compare them to other possible models. [PB]

**Clark, I.D. and Swain, H. (2005). *Distinguishing the real from the surreal in management reform: suggestions for beleaguered administrators in the government of Canada. Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique du Canada Volume 48, No. 4 (Winter/Hiver 2005), pp. 453-476. Toronto, ON: Institute of Public Administration of Canada.***

The authors illustrate the practical limitations of current management improvement initiatives in the Government of Canada, suggesting that the most noteworthy is their failure to recognize limitations. These initiatives, which include accountability mechanisms such as performance measurement and performance audit, are based on utopian frameworks. Managers subjected to their surreal demands are faced with an ethical dilemma: as public servants, they have a duty to comply with the requirements, yet meeting them conflicts with their duty to manage people and resources sensibly. The authors offer advice to managers on ways to improve management in departments despite the surreal demands. [PB]

**Canada. House of Commons. (2005). *An Examination of New Directives Governing Contribution Agreements for Selected Programs Delivered on Behalf of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and Status for Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/>.**

This is a report on the problems in implementing new policy directives designed to improve the administration, management and accountability of contribution programs funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). These directives were a response to the "Billion Dollar Boondoggle" scandal that arose from an internal audit of selected HRSDC programs carried out in 1999-2000. Problems included a failure by the Department to consult with groups during the development and implementation of the directives, which ran counter to the commitment outlined in *An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*. The report cites problems with the Department's new call-for-proposals process, and notes complaints about "forensic" accounting and micro-management in the negotiation and management of contribution agreements, as well as over-emphasis on financial inputs and insufficient attention to program effectiveness and outcomes. [PB]

**Imagine Canada; Canadian Council on Social Development; Canadian Policy Research Networks (2005) *Submission to the Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities*. Retrieved May 2006 from <http://www.voluntary-s.ca/eng/publications/index.cfm>.**

A submission made on behalf of Canadian non-profit organizations to the Gomery Commission investigating the sponsorship scandal, this brief expresses concern that, in a bid to fix the problems revealed in that scandal, already onerous reporting requirements would be made even more burdensome. It outlines some of the major complaints from the non-profit sector concerning the current public funding regime and accountability frameworks. [PB]

**Levasseur, K. and Phillips, S.D. (2005). *Square Pegs In Round Holes: Vertical and Horizontal Accountability in Voluntary Sector Contracting*. *The Philanthropist*, v. 19, no. 3 (July 2005). Toronto, ON: The Agora Foundation.**

This article examines how project funding by the Government of Canada demands accountability of voluntary sector organizations to government at the expense of accountability to partners, users, and stakeholders. It describes this relationship of accountability between government and voluntary sector organisations as top-down, or “vertical”. It argues that the effects of vertical accountability, with its emphasis on financial reporting, does little to enhance accountability for results, and that project funding is not only unable to nurture meaningful accountability, but that it also has a detrimental impact on voluntary organizations. It maintains that a new, less restrictive, funding tool is needed if the federal government is to contribute to capacity building and innovation in the voluntary sector, and to build a more constructive, collaborative relationship with it over the long run. It concludes by discussing how such a tool might be designed to nurture more meaningful accountability, both vertically and horizontally. [Publication Abstract]

**Lewis (2005). *Public Institution? or Public Nuisance? HRSDC, the community sector's increasingly dysfunctional 'partner'*. *Making Waves* 15 (4): 2-6. Vernon, BC: Centre for Community Enterprise. Retrieved October 2006 at <http://www.cedworks.com/hrsd.html>.**

The author claims that HRSDC rules meant to set rigorous standards for accountability are sapping the vitality from once vibrant programs. The article focuses mainly on employment support initiatives and social enterprises. The author argues that "hyper-categorization" of programs and "twisted micro-management" promote waste, inefficiency and chaos by interfering with overall coherence of programs. According to people in the field, rules punish entrepreneurial behaviour in the community sector. HRSDC employees are themselves constrained by these rules and by a siege mentality under which the top priority is not getting embroiled in any further scandals. [PB]

**MacNeil, R. (2005). *Accountability and Community Economic Development: The Funder-Governed NGO*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Research Alliance for Community Innovation and Networking. Retrieved June 2006 from [www3.fis.utoronto.ca](http://www3.fis.utoronto.ca)**

Part literature review, part case study, this article examines the question of how non-profit organizations can reconcile their responsibilities to the community with demands for accountability from funders which can cause projects to reflect funders' priorities. MacNeil notes the frustration of people in the community sector over new accountability rules. He uses a case study to illustrate problems, and explores the context in which these problems are occurring - a government caught between conflicting management models and reacting to the HRD scandal of 2000. [PB]

## *Assessment and Accountability in Education*

**Kirst, M. (1990). *Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers. (Policy Perspectives)* Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office.**

This is a guide to the issues in designing and implementing accountability models for U.S. public schools, and discusses different concepts of accountability, their history in education, and different approaches to accountability. It notes the ongoing conflict between the need to respect the professionalism of educators and the need for those receiving public money to account for its use. It identifies six approaches to accountability: 1) through performance reporting; (2) through monitoring and compliance with standards/regulations, (3) through incentive systems; (4) through reliance on the market; (5) through changing the locus of authority or control of schools; and (6) through changing professional roles. It suggests that policymakers should combine two or more of these approaches for best results. [PB]

**Leithwood, K.; Edge, K.; and Jantzi, D. (1999). *Educational Accountability: The State of the Art.* Gutersloh, Germany. Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers.**

Government policy on education has come to emphasize mechanisms of accountability as a means of ensuring and improving educational outcomes. The book attempts to respond to the following five issues: Who is accountable, to whom, for what, at what level, and with what consequences? It describes a framework developed by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for understanding educational accountability in response to these issues, which identifies four approaches to accountability: the market competition approach, the decentralized decision-making approach, the professional, and the management approach. The book describes how member countries of the International Network of Innovative School Systems (Canada, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, and Switzerland) are using and combining these approaches in designing and implementing their accountability tools, and considers implications for future policy and practice. [PB]

**Reeves, D. (2003). *Accountability for learning: how teachers and school leaders can take charge.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

Accountability has become a “dirty word” for many educators, and in most school systems, has become synonymous with test scores. The author argues that teachers have to take the initiative if they want accountability mechanisms to move beyond narrow accounting exercises to provide constructive and useful feedback for them and their students. He encourages them to take the lead in developing “holistic” student-centred accountability systems that will tell the stories behind the numbers. Such systems would demonstrate the different variables that produce educational outcomes, providing a clearer picture of the reasons for success or failure, and a clearer route to improvement. He shows how such accountability systems can enhance teacher motivation and lead to significant improvements in student achievement and equity, even in traditionally low-performing schools. [PB]

**Sirotnik, K.A. (Ed.) (2004). *Holding Accountability Accountable: What Ought to Matter in Public Education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.**

This essay collection critiques current high-stakes accountability systems that have taken hold in the U.S. public education system. The editor asserts that accountability practices in public education are “miseducative”, “misdirected and misanthropic”, grounded in the ideology of “accountablism” which couches all educational objectives in behavioural terms and uses coercion based on the consequences of narrowly defined outcomes to control behaviour. The articles illustrate the negative effects of heavy-handed accountability systems on educators and students. [PB]

**Wilson, M. (Ed.) (2004). *Towards Coherence between Classroom Assessment and Accountability*. 103rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**

This volume seeks to restore the classroom to its rightful place at the centre of analyses of accountability through assessment. Ideally, assessment should encourage a two-way flow of information between the classroom and systems outside, but "standards-based" frameworks tend to direct the flow of accountability from the outside into the classroom. Yet standardized tests sent into the classroom to produce quantifiable “outcomes” represent only a fraction of all the assessment that goes on there - most of it generated within the classroom by the teacher. The articles look at different ways in which this rich source of assessment could be tapped to create a more complete picture of the learning that is occurring. Five source chapters describe successful classroom assessment models developed in partnership with teachers. The articles offer a range of perspectives on the issues of classroom assessment, standardized testing, and accountability. [PB]

## *Assessment and Accountability in Adult Education*

**Armstrong P. (1986). "Called into account: evaluation, accountability and objectivity" in M. Zukas (ed), *Papers from the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults*. Leeds, UK: University of Leeds/SCUTREA, 1986 pp 134-141.**

This paper examines the politics of evaluation research, using a case study to illustrate the problems such politics pose in relation to accountability. Processes of evaluation to call someone to account are looked at as relations of power. The author notes that such a process cannot be objective because of this power dynamic, and because the values of the party seeking the account will determine what is measured in the assessment. He calls on researchers to be aware of the political nature of the research they may be called upon to do. [PB]

**Ziegler, S. (1996). *The Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Education: A Review of Issues and Outcomes-based Evaluation of Literacy Programs*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Literacy Coalition.**

This report examines issues associated with demonstrating the effectiveness of adult literacy programs and reviews research. The report is divided into three sections. Section One notes that there are few empirical studies that show the impacts of literacy programs or identify predictors of program success - among the reasons for this is a lack of common criteria for evaluating performance. However, reliable data on outcomes would benefit practitioners, students and policymakers. Section Two reviews research on variables affecting the outcomes of literacy programs. Section Three provides conclusions and recommendations, and poses questions for further research. [PB]

**Vella, J.; Berardinelli, P.; Burrow, J. (1997). *How Do They Know They Know: Evaluating Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

This book takes a popular education approach to the issue of assessment for accountability. It describes how the Jubilee Popular Education Center developed an "accountability process", starting with a clear identification of the purpose of, or results expected from, the education program. These include learning, transfer (learning applied by learners in their work), and impact (improvement in the learners' organisation as a result of transfer). The authors take the reader step-by-step through their approach, which integrates evaluation into program planning, engaging learners as partners throughout. The concepts are related to real-life situations, demonstrating how they can apply to a variety of settings. [PB]

**Alamprese, J. (1998) *Promoting Systemic Change in Adult Education and Employment and Training*. Columbus, OH: Center for Education and Training for Employment. Available at <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/>**

This paper describes approaches to systemic reform in U.S. adult education programs, based on the author's work in documenting state program improvement initiatives in California, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and other states. It begins with a definition of systemic change as well as a framework for understanding it. It presents approaches to systemic reform as they relate to four possible areas that policymakers can use: (1) stimulating the use of innovative management, assessment, and instructional practices; (2) developing policy to support change strategies; (3) facilitating organizational and professional learning; and (4) coordinating and collaborating within and across states to leverage support for adult education. In describing these approaches, Alamprese examines factors to consider in the development of accountability systems for adult and vocational education and employment and training systems, and looks at ways in which data can be used in managing and improving programs. [ERIC + PB]

**Merrifield, J. (1998). *Contested Ground: Performance Accountability in Adult Basic Education*. NCSALL Reports #1. Retrieved June 16, 2004 from the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy web site: <http://www.ncsall.net/>.**

Practitioners of adult basic education (ABE) are being challenged to demonstrate its effectiveness in terms of producing student and societal outcomes. This policy paper draws on the literature from education, government and management and other fields to lay out key issues in performance accountability and present recommendations for policy and action. One key issue is whether all those with an interest in ABE can agree on what constitutes authentic indicators of program effectiveness. The question of what counts as good performance comes down to what people value. To avoid being experienced as the imposition of some people's values on others, accountability relationships should be mutual among different interested parties. Such a "web" of accountability relationships would accommodate the values of all those involved in the enterprise of ABE. Merrifield also recommends that multiple assessment tools be developed and used to reflect the complex reality of ABE. [PB]

*See also- Demetrian, G. (2000). Reflecting on Culture Wars in Adult Literacy Education: Exploring Critical Issues in "Contested Ground"(p. 19)*

**Garner, B. (1999). Nationwide Accountability: the National Reporting System.**  
*Focus on Basics: Connecting Research & Practice, Vol. 3, Issue B.* Retrieved June 20, 2006 from the NCSALL database at <http://www.ncsall.net/>.

Under growing pressure to document that participation in literacy programs leads to positive results, federal and state administrators of the U.S. adult basic education system embarked on an effort to improve the national data reporting system for this education system. By redesigning the National Reporting System (NRS), they also hoped to link it more closely to program accountability and improvement. A pilot test of the new system found difficulties in obtaining data, especially follow-up data from former students. [PB]

**Goethel, J. and Gabler, C. (1999). Accountability in a Multi-Faceted Program.**  
*Focus on Basics: Connecting Research & Practice, Vol. 3, Issue B.* Retrieved June 20, 2006 from the NCSALL database at <http://www.ncsall.net/>.

Increasing partnerships means satisfying more partners. This article shows how one volunteer literacy program (Literacy Volunteers of America - Chippewa Valley) has been clarifying goals and improving accountability systems to deal with the challenges of accountability as it becomes larger and more complex. The managers of this program describe themselves as being accountable to their students, their tutors, their staff, and to fourteen different funders. Their organization has created a strategic plan encompassing its myriad activities, which has enabled it to clearly identify goals and target improvements. In using it, programs are now being assessed according to clear criteria. [PB]

**Keenan, C. (1999). Guiding Improvement: Pennsylvania's Odyssey.** *Focus on Basics: Connecting Research & Practice, Vol. 3, Issue B, June 1999.* Retrieved June 20, 2006 from the NCSALL database at <http://www.ncsall.net/>.

This article describes the creation of an accountability system in Pennsylvania. Combining direction from the top and innovation at the local level, the state aimed to achieve a situation of mutual accountability. The state would be more responsive to local needs, ease access to funding and invest in teacher training and experimental programs. Local programs would bring teachers, tutors, program coordinators and administrators together to solve problems identified in the assessment data. Drawing on experiences from pilot projects, they built on current local practices to develop state-wide standards of assessment. [PB]

**Sticht, T.G. (1999). Testing and Accountability in Adult Literacy Education.**  
Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/sticht/testing/cover.htm>.

This report discusses the design and evaluation of workplace literacy programs and the use of standardized tests in program evaluation and accountability as well as the concepts behind the use of these tests. The author notes that while federal funders want "objective" and "measurable" outcomes from local workplace literacy programs, the major concern of local programs is to meet the needs of their adult learners and partners. Meanwhile, assessment



tools such as standardized tests are often inappropriate, as they do not measure how well the programs enable learners to meet the literacy requirements of actual jobs. [PB]

**Zepke, K. (1999). *Autonomy, Accountability in Adult Education and the Politics of Official Knowledge. New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning. 27 (2) pp. 31-44.***

Although the nature of knowledge is contested, "official knowledge" is promulgated in national standards such as New Zealand's National Qualifications Framework. Autonomy and accountability are used in the politics of official knowledge by competing interests. Critical theory provides guidelines for adult educators to deal with the politics. [ERIC]

**Battell, E. (2001). *Naming the Magic: Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy. Province of British Columbia. Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/magic/cover.htm>***

This report presents a description of the following techniques for documenting non-academic outcomes (NAOs) for literacy students: A Multi-Media Approach, Using Journals, Goal Setting by Learners, Anecdotal Reporting and End-of-Term Reports (combination of two techniques) and Questions for Developing Awareness. It documents the difficulties encountered during the field-testing, outlines what was learned during the field-testing process and makes six recommendations, based on the project, that call for more extensive and focused study of non-academic outcomes. [From NALD]

**Demetron, G. (2000). *Reflecting on Culture Wars in Adult Literacy Education: Exploring Critical Issues in "Contested Ground". Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/cultrwar/cover.htm>***

While the theories of New Literacy Studies are being applied in teaching, they have had much less currency at the level of educational systems and policies - institutions, funding, and accountability. A shift in the understanding of literacy means that performance is defined differently and requires a different approach to accountability. Perspective on what is good performance in adult education, and what should be measured, depends on context and position. Learners may want a program that treats them with respect, allows them to feel successful, provides them with the learning opportunities they want, and supports results that are important to them. Policy-makers may simply want a program that gets people into jobs. However, as Juliet Merrifield (*see p. 16*) maintains, the concept of functional literacy should be laid to rest. The concept is flawed, its definition arbitrary, its measurement problematic. The phenomenon of "functioning in life" cannot readily be equated with literacy. Adults with limited literacy skills should be credited for the skills and knowledge they have. Educators should build on and extend this knowledge and skill, based on the needs, desires, and interests of the adult learners, rather than dwell on measuring how "functional" a learner is or needs to become, according to standardized tests. [From NALD]

**Hodkinson, P. and Bloomer, M. (2000). Accountability, Audit and Exclusion in Further and Higher Education, paper presented at SCUTREA Annual Conference, University of Nottingham, 3-5 July.**

This paper presents research evidence about the complex causes of drop-out from further education, and questions the pertinence of course completion as a measure of the efficacy of a further education program. The authors note that many of the reasons for dropping out are beyond the institutions' control, and do not adequately measure what learning has actually gone on. Furthermore, giving such prominence to retention outcome measures is a distraction from seriously working to widen participation in lifelong learning.  
[Author Abstract]

**Cora, M. (2001). Layers, Brushes, and Multi-Lane Highways: Examining Accountability in a Non-Traditional Program. *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 13, pp.9-12. Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/>**

Reflecting on her experiences as director of the Swearer Center for Public Service in Providence, Rhode Island, Cora argues that accountability should be seen as a "multi-lane highway", or "in layers". There are many relationships involved in adult education that involve some form of accountability. While the institution is accountable to the funder, its accountability to the adult learners is more fundamental. Working backwards from this primal relation of accountability, other relations emerge: To meet the needs of the adult learners, the institution must be accountable to the tutors to support their teaching; the tutors must be accountable for their performance, and so on. It is important that all players identify and articulate their expectations of each other to create clear channels of accountability. [PB]

**Kelly, J. (2001). The Adventure Continues. *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 13, pp. 13-16 Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/>**

This article describes how assessment in adult basic education programs has changed over the previous ten years. Among the changes is the degree of accountability required by most funding sources. Funders now want to know much more about many more things. Since each may require that program efficacy be demonstrated in a different way, programs with multiple funders can become entangled in multiple reporting requirements. While being accountable is reasonable, it is unreasonable to have to devote more hours to fulfilling the funders' ideas of accountability than to doing useful assessment with learners. [PB]

**Gabb, S. (2001). Authentic Goal Setting with ABE Learners: Accountability for Programs or Process for Learning? *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 13, pp. 17-23. Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/>**

The National Reporting System (NRS) of the United States has as its stated goal "to establish an accountability system for the federally-funded adult basic education programs." The official Implementation Guidelines require learner goal setting as a measure of program performance. Meanwhile, practitioners across the state of Massachusetts have encouraged recognition of learner-generated goals. However, the purposes for goal setting envisioned by practitioners and the process for supporting learners in setting goals, differ radically from the

procedures outlined in the NRS Measures and Methods. The article explores the implications of this tension and ways of dealing with it. [PB]

**Reuys, S. (2001). New Accountability Rules Pose Dilemma for Programs. *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 13, pp. 5-8. Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/>**

This article looks at one challenge posed to programs as they try to comply with the requirements of the new National Reporting System (NRS) and the state's SMARTT data management system. It is how to assess and report individual student progress in literacy and language learning in a way that meets the new reporting requirements yet provides teachers and students with assessment information that is meaningful, accurate, and useful. The article looks at the following possible approaches to this issue: simply adopting standardized tests as the sole means of assessment; trying to use alternative assessment methods and “translate” the results thereby generated into “standardized” results (GLE`s and SPL`s); or combining standardized tests and alternative assessments. [PB]

**Project Literacy Victoria. (2001). Outcome Measurement for a Community Literacy Program. Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.plv.ca/outcome/cover.htm>**

In the non-profit sector there is increasing emphasis on accountability and a trend for funders to demand measurable outcomes. In 1999 forty basic literacy instructors in B.C. met to discuss how the non-academic outcomes in the lives of learners could be documented. They drafted six techniques, to be further developed by several conference participants in consultation with the project co-ordinator. The report describes these techniques and documents how they were field-tested by literacy practitioners including instructors, tutors, and tutor co-ordinators. It documents the difficulties encountered during the field-testing: timing, writing for instructors with a range of experience, and confusion about instructions. It also outlines what was learned about the techniques, the non-academic outcomes themselves, the field, the field-testing, and, importantly, self-reflection. Finally, it makes six recommendations that call for more extensive and focused study of non-academic outcomes, and for technical assistance to non-profits to adopt outcome measurement tools. [PB]

**Derrick, J. (2002). What Could a Socio-Cultural Approach to Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Practice Be, and How Does This Align to Current Practice [Paper one for *Economic and Social Research Council Seminar*, 18 October]. ESRC Adult Basic Education Seminar Series. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/hce/ABE-seminars/>**

This paper discusses the significance of England’s national performance measurement systems to program-level practices in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL (LNE), and assesses the extent to which the current adult education framework supports socio-cultural approaches to instruction and assessment. Reflects on the question of how England may establish a regulatory framework that ensures consistent, efficient and effective support for learning, without alienating the learning process from the social field. [CE]

**Derrick, J. (2002). A Socio-Cultural Approach To Literacy Numeracy And ESOL Practice: A Practice Perspective. [Paper two for *Economic and Social Research Council Seminar, October 18*]. ESRC Adult Basic Education Seminar Series. Retrieved June 2006 from: <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/hce/ABE-seminars/papers/ABE1-JayDerrick2.pdf>**

This paper focuses on performance measurement systems for LNE (Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL) work, particularly in England. The author argues that the detachment of policy development on Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL (LNE) from adult education in general resulted in the loss of a socio-cultural perspective. A socio-cultural perspective is rooted in cultural and social practice, and promotes informal as well as formal learning. This is contrasted to a process in which learning is abstracted from the social and cultural realities of those involved. The English framework focuses on external assessment and national tests. The author suggests a need to develop performance indicators more congenial to a socio-cultural approach. [PB]

**Mislevy, R.J. and Knowles K.T., [Eds.] (2002). *Performance Assessments for Adult Education: Exploring the Measurement Issues Report of a Workshop*. Committee for the Workshop on Alternatives for Assessing Adult Education and Literacy Programs, Board on Testing and Assessment, Center for Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press**

This report considers the measurement issues of using performance assessment for accountability purposes, given that the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requires states to establish comprehensive accountability systems for adult education programs, featuring the gathering of data on certain core measures. It includes a summary of options and strategies discussed for practical steps to make performance assessments in adult education useful to educators and students and adequate for national reporting purposes without requiring excessive amounts of staff time or money. [PB]

**Pheasey, A. (2002). *What Do Adult Literacy Students Think Being Literate Is?* Retrieved June 27, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/ripal/Resources/publicat/whatdo/cover.htm>**

As a member of the RiPAL Network, the author investigated what adult literacy students think being literate is. In this report, based on interviewing students at The Learning Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, Pheasey shares what she learned about the question “What do literacy students think being literate is?”. She also wanted to know what notions of literacy or personal goals learners had when they came into adult literacy programs. From a review of the literature, she found that the meaning of the term “literacy” is often unclear. Through taped individual and small group interviews she found that participants were motivated to come to the program by the need for social interaction and the need to acquire skills (reading and writing). Although participants did not associate being literate with economic outcomes, they did associate levels of literacy with social class, and some reported feelings of exclusion associated with their low levels of literacy. [PB]

**Van Duzer, C. (2002). *Issues in Accountability and Assessment for Adult ESL Instruction*. National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Available online at [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/)**

Throughout the 1990s, legislation in the U.S. increasingly required federally funded programs to be more accountable. For adult education, these requirements have intensified the debate among practitioners, researchers, and policy makers over what constitutes success and how to measure it. At the same time, the number of English language learners enrolled in adult education programs has been growing, particularly in areas of the country that have not previously had many immigrants. New programs are being established to meet the demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and existing programs are expanding. This Q&A describes the legislative background of current accountability requirements for ESL programs, the issues involved in testing level gain, and critical questions whose answers can lead the field forward. [NALD]

**Alderson, L. and Twiss, D. (2003). *Literacy for Women on the Streets*. Retrieved June 27, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/litforwm/cover.htm>**

This is a report on a research project designed to examine the impact of literacy activities on the lives of women working as sex-trade workers in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. An integral part of the literacy program, the project shows how different forms of documentation can be used to demonstrate the extent to which a project is achieving desired results. The authors describe the research and share the tale of their two-year experience and their findings to give funders, literacy and community development workers, and women living and working on the street, more confidence about embarking on literacy programs together. [From NALD]

**Belzer, A. (2003). *Living With It: Federal Policy Implementation In Adult Basic Education. The Cases Of The Workforce Investment Act And Welfare Reform*. NCSALL Reports No. 24. Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Retrieved June 6, 2006 from the NCSALL database at <http://www.ncsall.net/>**

This study gathered data from six states through in depth interviews on practitioners' perceptions of how the Workforce Investment Act and welfare reform changed their practices. As the policy changes made their way from the federal level, states, programs and practitioners were able to respond to and reshape policy to their own contexts. However, while accountability requirements raised expectations for educators, there was not much additional support or resources to enable educators to better meet these expectations. Consequently, the requirements often simply created additional burdens on instructors. The author recommends that policymakers ensure that policy provides clear direction rather than mixed signals, and concern themselves with improving the professional climate for educators. [PB]

**Crowther, J. (2003). Accounting and Accountability In Adult and Community Education: Reflections On The Scottish Experience. *Speaking in Tongues: the Languages of Lifelong Learning*, pp. 45-50, SCUTREA Conference Proceedings.**

This article addresses the changing language of adult and community education in Scotland through its incorporation into the "managerial politics" of government, and the implications of that change for practice. It traces a shift from a discourse informed by a humanist ideology stressing personal growth and empowerment to a discourse informed by neo-liberal ideology, in which international competitiveness requires the development of "human capital". Neo-liberal ideology views learners as being primarily consumers and sellers of labour who are responsible for increasing their value in the marketplace through lifelong learning, rather than relying on the state for help. It is in this context that the current drive for systems of evaluation and accountability needs to be understood. [PB]

**Eckert, E., & Bell. A. (2004). Authentic Accountability In Literacy Education. *Adult Basic Education*, 14 (3), 174-188.**

Educators are resentful at having accountability requirements imposed on them when results judged to be important by such systems often conflict with what is important to educators and learners. These systems rely on a positivist approach that assumes an objective reality composed of variables that can be isolated from other variables. The result is a "one-size-fits-all" approach to assessment. As an alternative, the authors propose a framework for "authentic accountability" that reflects the complexity of interactions between learners, teachers and programs, and allows the voices of learners to be heard. They suggest some ways to put this framework into practice. [PB]

**Herrington, M. (2004). The Both...and...And of Everything. *Literacies*, #3, 9-10 (Spring 2004) Available at <http://www.literacyjournal.ca/>**

This article addresses the day-to-day issues for literacy workers of trying to construct a professional space for development when quite different concepts of literacy coexist and compete around them. Many literacy practitioners have to find ways of working with opposing concepts at the same time. Recent policy initiatives in the UK - the Skills for Life initiative in particular - demonstrate how limited the policy frameworks tend to be compared with thinking in the field. [author + PB]

**Jackson, N. (2004). What Counts as Literacy Work? *Literacies*, #3, 9-10. Available online at <http://www.literacyjournal.ca/>**

This article examines the issues surrounding the development of national literacy policy frameworks in Canada. In June 2003, a Parliamentary committee report called for a first-ever pan-Canadian accord on adult literacy and numeracy skills development that would commit different levels of government to work together to increase the proportion of Canadians with higher-level literacy skills. However, while the prospect of a national system has promise, the experience of other countries shows that it also has its share of pitfalls. Complaints about the distorting effects of the policy and reporting frameworks that are meant to ensure



accountability in such systems are remarkably similar across national boundaries. These frameworks are said to be imposed and not reflective of realities in the field. Literacy practitioners either deal with them by “producing the right numbers” by hook or by crook, or are worn down and demoralized by the demands placed on them. Jackson recommends that literacy practitioners become more aware of and active in the policy discussions that are affecting their work. [PB]

**Maclachlan, K. (2004). *Changing Policies, Changing Practices, Changing Approaches to Adult Literacies Learning. Adult Education and Poverty Reduction: Proceedings of the International Conference, University of Botswana, July 2004***

Adult literacy education can achieve significant results if it is part of a broad, multi-faceted strategy for reducing poverty. For that to happen, however, such education must transcend the dominant understanding of literacies as a set of technical skills taught to overcome skill deficits, and detached from their social context. It should be based on a relational concept of literacies in which learners build on what they already know to develop social communicative practices of engagement with the social contexts of their lives such as family, the workplace, and the community. In this respect, Scotland’s adult literacy and numeracy policy compares favourably with that of England, where programs must meet standardized national targets to receive funding. Scotland’s system enables learners to articulate their own goals for learning, and the success of their learning is measured against those goals. [PB]

**Sticht, T.G. (2004). *The Delusion of Accountability in the Adult Education and Literacy System (AELS) of the United States. Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/sticht/may04/may21.htm>***

The author discusses a report from the U.S. Department of Education (2003) and suggests it is propagating "delusional beliefs" because it presents information that is supposed to be used to hold programs accountable, but is based on arbitrary benchmarks and tests that are not comparable from state to state. The report, he notes, favourably compares such "objective" assessments with "subjective assessments" by teachers, while also dismissing the opinions of learners. Sticht argues that teachers and students are better equipped to decide whether programs are meeting their needs, and laments that current delusional beliefs about accountability preclude trusting them to make such decisions without outside interference. [PB]

**Asselin, M.; Early, M.; Filipenko, M. (2005). *Accountability, Assessment, and ICT Literacies in the Canadian Context. Canadian Journal of Education, Volume 28, Number 4. Available at <http://www.csse.ca/CJE/>***

This article explores the issues faced by Ministries of Education in their assessment policies as they try to account for the "new literacies" of information technology. While governments and industry exhort educators to expand the notion of literacy to include this new technology, the provinces are giving increasing importance to province-wide assessments that continue to exclude the new literacies. By analysing quantitative data and conducting interviews, the authors found that the provinces were still years away from including new

literacies in any meaningful way. They argue that traditional assessment programs cannot adequately measure these skills, and they call for a more balanced approach that recognizes the limitations of current public accountability measures while moving toward a broader assessment framework that includes alternative assessment techniques. [PB]

**Bianco, J.L. (2006). Processes of Policy Making and Theories of Public Policy: Relating Power, Policy and Professional Knowledge in Literacy Agendas**  
*Literacy Across the Curriculum* *Media Focus*, Volume 18, No. 1  
<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/publications/lobianco.pdf>

The author argues that understanding policy is itself a form of literacy that literacy educators and researchers need to attend to if they are to have a chance of influencing the policies that affect their work. They tend to experience policy as an almost endless sequence of intrusions into their work - intrusions that notably include the imposition of ever more stringent kinds of external accountability for the outcomes of literacy programs. The author maps out the ideological evolution affecting public policy on adult literacy that has led governments to reduce resources to the adult literacy sector while at the same time making increasingly stringent demands for “results”. To engage these policies in a democratic debate requires a critical understanding of the ideological presuppositions underlying them. [PB]



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