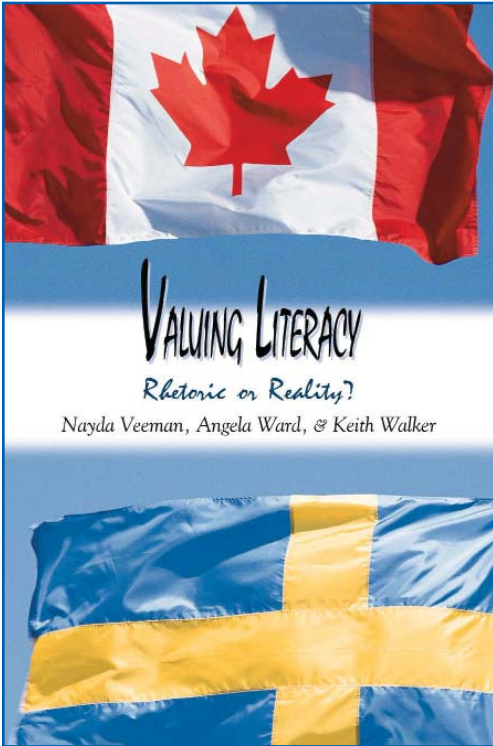


# VALUING LITERACY: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

by *Nayda Veeman, Angela Ward, and Keith Walker*



*Valuing Literacy* is a "broad brush" approach that bridges the gap between academic literature, public policy about literacy, and lifelong learning—topics of international concern in the globalized economy. The book is based on a recently completed case study of adult learning policy in Canada and Sweden; it draws on one author's over twenty-five years of practical experience in adult education and literacy, and the respective expertise of two academics in the fields of education policy and literacy.

The International Adult Literacy Survey (1995) reported that adult literacy levels in Sweden were consistently higher than those in Canada and were less related to socio-economic status, and level of schooling, than they were in Canada. Through the personal stories of Canadian and Swedish adults who choose to go back to school and the educators who work with them, the authors describe the impact of public policy on literacy outcomes. They raise questions about the impact of public awareness efforts and ask whether current literacy strategies have effectively increased learning opportunities for adults.

Intended for policymakers, adult educators, and education researchers—as well as being of interest to the general reader—the book has international appeal as it contrasts the impact on adult literacy levels of the social democratic approach of northern Europe and the liberal approach of English-speaking countries like Canada. Contents include: an overview of the significance of literacy today; past and present government approaches to literacy; the impact of diversity on literacy and learning; who goes back to school and why; critical reflections on the research findings; challenges and tensions in adult literacy policy; values underlying social policy; and options for moving from rhetoric to reality.

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