

## Book Reviews/Recensions

### ***ENHANCING ADULT MOTIVATION TO LEARN: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR TEACHING ALL ADULTS***

R. J. Wlodkowski. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2008, 508 pages.

This is the only book you should ever have to read about how to teach adults effectively and successfully. The strength of the book is twofold: it addresses the practice of adult education in a thoughtful and practical way, and it draws on the author's extensive and varied experience as an adult educator. Be forewarned, however, that the words "feminism," "radical," or "paradigm" (as in shift) do not appear at all in the index, although attention is carefully paid to the diversity and dignity of all learners. Artfully revised to follow its two previous editions, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults* continues to fulfill the promise of its author's first foray into adult motivation and learning in 1985. In this 2008 rendition of exploring how adults learn, Raymond Wlodkowski delves more deeply into the science of motivation with the addition of new material on brain function and its relationship to learning. Complementing a hefty 444 pages of text, 36 pages of references culled from Wlodkowski's rich history of psychological practice, consulting, research, and teaching adults around the world provide a classic overview of the field of adult education: Mezirow, Brookfield, Merriam, Marsick, Tinto, Bloom, Vygotsky, Caffarella, Knowles, and Freire. Wlodkowski also continues to draw on Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, which he has used both in his writing and in his teaching to capture the "deeply satisfying experience of an intrinsically motivating activity" (p. 266).

The book's nine chapters include — in addition to Wlodkowski's hallmark material on adult learning and learner characteristics, motivation, and the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, developed in 1994 — four chapters devoted to the central motivational conditions of inclusion, attitude, meaning, and competence; and an expanded final chapter on the application of motivational strategies to teaching and design. In this chapter, new material on self-directed learning and self-regulation permits the author to link the topics within his motivational framework to new areas of interest in learning arising from recent research in e-learning and social cognition. That said, beyond a single reference to Garrison's work on self-directed learning and an acknowledgement in the preface that the world of learning, and access to learning, have changed considerably in the past few years, there is no mention in this book of e-learning as part of the adult education world. This is unfortunate, as distance educators are in as much need, or perhaps even more need, of motivational strategies as traditional educators. But Wlodkowski is not a distance educator, and he has remained true to his background and expertise by turning his attention inward to a deeper, more comprehensive exploration of what makes learners "tick" — and learn.

The 2008 edition of *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* features the “integration of a neuroscientific understanding of motivation and learning within an instructional model responsive to linguistically and culturally different adult learners” (p. xi). The author introduces the brain material right away; it runs primarily from pages 8 to 23, and is supplemented by diagrams that clearly show the configuration of the brain and illustrate what neurons and neuronal networks look like. This was not particularly interesting to me as I like to understand learning more holistically. But the scientific material contained here is well-connected to topics that we are already familiar with, such as emotions in learning and intrinsic motivation, and Wlodkowski consistently integrates the new material into our educational understanding of learning, providing throughout the book biological explanations of learners’ responses to learning situations. That said, I was not quite convinced of the fit, and found the book’s considerable wisdom, thankfully, quite accessible without immersing myself in the new scientific material.

The balance of the book comprises what adult educators have come to expect from this well-established voice in adult education. The expanded text, embracing a blend of adult education, social science, and multicultural studies, incorporates examples from a variety of cultures, including the American indigenous cultures with which Wlodkowski is so familiar. It is packed with rubrics, charts, excellent sources, and 60 fully described strategies for assisting learners with their learning. From Brookfield comes an adaptation of the Critical Incident Questionnaire. From Caffarella, adapted on the basis of Wlodkowski’s own consulting work with BCIT, comes a description of the transfer of learning using a case study. Illustrating Anderson and Krathwohl’s 2001 revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy, Table 5.1 presents more than a full page of examples of “Action Words and Learning Objectives” (pp. 156-57). From Walvoord’s 2004 work comes an adaptation of a rubric for “Recognizing Alternative Points of View” (p. 343). Dick and Carey’s design work is cited. Sample learning contracts from the author’s own teaching experience are provided. In mentioning these myriad examples of applied strategies, my point is to highlight both the breadth and hands-on usefulness of this text. I have been teaching — successfully, I think! — for many years, but I have recently put beside my computer a printout of a set of Wlodkowski’s probing questions so I might enhance the quality of my online interactions with learners.

At the outset of this revised edition, as he did in both previous editions, Wlodkowski lists a set of six promises (p. xii) that he promises to the reader to keep. They include such commonsense items as minimizing jargon, providing lots of examples, including humour, and supplying methods that are backed by the author’s own teaching experience. It’s my belief that he keeps these promises.

Dianne Conrad  
Director, Centre for Learning Accreditation,  
Athabasca University, Alberta, Canada.