

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS IN ADULT EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL PROGRAMMING MODEL

Edgar J. Boone, R. Dale Safrit, and Jo Jones. Waveland Press Inc., Illinois, 2002, 307 pages.

Among the array of program planning models currently available, Boone, Safrit, and Jones offer yet another option for one to consider. In the second edition of this book, two colleagues join Boone in describing an updated version of the "conceptual programming model."

The conceptual model is presented as an alternative to other professional planning models that exist within the framework of adult education. The authors take particular care to situate it within the field, as an entire chapter is dedicated to reviewing 13 other adult education planning models. The models presented range from Caffarella to Freire. This thorough contextualization allows the book to stand out from many others and may be a particularly useful feature to practitioners or students new to program planning.

The authors see planners of adult programs as change agents who should employ a holistic, systems oriented approach. The institutions and communities within which educators operate, as well as the "target audiences" are all conceived of as systems. To understand these structures, the authors believe that the adult educator must have a good grasp of the literature within adult education; understand the theories, concepts, and principles found in the behavioural and social sciences; and possess the skills needed to involve stakeholders in collaboration. In addition, the educator should be skilled in translating needs into meaningful design and in program evaluation. These sentiments echo many other programming theorists and reiterate themes central to program planning.

The conceptual planning model proposed by the authors consists of three main sub-processes: planning, design and implementation, and evaluation and accountability. The authors stress, despite the sequential presentation of these subprocesses, that the planner need not follow a linear pattern in utilizing the conceptual model. The sub-process of planning is further broken down into two dimensions. The first requires the planner to develop a complete understanding of the organizational context in which he or she is working, as well as the needs of its current and emerging audiences. Second, the planner is required to form linkages between the key organizational and learner systems to identify needs to be targeted by the program. To complete this process, the authors rely heavily on social mapping techniques and also mention, but do little to explain, democratic processes. Design and implementation are presented as translating the needs identified in the planning sub-process into a clear educational design. To accomplish this, planners organize needs, objectives, change strategies, and outcomes into hierarchies. The planner then analyzes these, alongside issues of resources and marketing, to design a plan of implementation. Ideally, the third sub-process of design and implementation should overlap with the final sub-process of evaluation and accountability. The authors present this sub-process as part of the "feedback loop" that helps the planner to refine an effective program responsibly. They emphasize that the planner should evaluate both the micro-outcomes in a formative manner

as well as the long-term macro outcomes in a summative manner. The authors recognize, on one hand, the ethical responsibility of planners to keep stakeholders well-informed through evaluation, and on the other hand, that thorough evaluation is challenging given the amount of time and resources this aspect of planning normally consumes. Little practical advice is given to help the planner close the gap between these competing agendas.

An additional weakness of the book is that while brief mention is given to sites where this model has been applied, the reader is primarily referred to appendices and further reading to gain insight into the reality of applying the conceptual planning model. Given that the authors argue for a scientific approach to programming, the lack of specific evidence and data in terms of practice is frustrating. Without specific case studies, the book remains more in the realm of theory than practice.

Moreover, while the conceptual model holds much strength, it remains closely related to other conventional planning models. While recognition may be given to the importance of not being bound to a step-by-step model, little practical evidence is provided as to how it could be used differently. Lip service is also paid to the wide range of contexts in which this model could be applied. While this may be true in theory, the authors also repetitively refer to the fact that most adult educators work within the framework of formal institutions and portray these in an unadventurous light. In this sense, the book does not elevate planning literature into a new realm — one that would recognize that there are clear differences between situational contexts and that these contexts may in fact require different approaches.

Overall, this is one of the better books on the market for providing a clear and concise introduction to key issues within program planning. While conventional, the model presented is practical and realistic. It is also very well-situated within the broader field of adult education and the subfield of program planning. The authors are thoughtful in reflecting on Boone's earlier rendition of the conceptual planning model and clearly take the insights of their colleagues into account in developing this current version of conceptual planning.

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