

Book Reviews Recensions

ADULT EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Leona M. English (Ed.). University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2012, 290 pages.

Adult Education and Health is a call to action for health and education professionals and graduate students alike to critically examine the links between learning and health. The book suggests that adult education principles, practices, and theories can fill the existing gap in knowledge and practice of prevalent transmission models of health education and promotion. With this volume, English has collected a series of diverse examples of adult education theory and practice to distill an emergent critical theory of health learning that she coins “adult health learning” (p. 13). Adding to the strength of this theory is its grounding in an amalgamation of the important insights from both health theory and critical theory (described in Chapter 1).

Adult Education and Health is a collection of contributions from 29 authors from Canada, Australia, Botswana, and the United States. The book is laid out into four parts comprising 17 chapters that give a diverse perspective on adult education theory and practice in the author(s)’ respective contexts. As such, this book is an informative and practical compilation of some of the most useful teaching and learning theories and research practices distinctive to the field of adult education.

In Part 1, English provides a foundation for the adult health learning theory that undergirds this book. She builds this theory first by drawing on relevant concepts from health theory such as health promotion and the social determinants of health. She then adds components of critical theory such as challenging ideology and social class, unmasking power, and gendering and racializing learning to round out her contribution. The essays in Part 2 cover a range of examples of health research models that promote community engagement and participatory planning approaches. Here, the authors address research practice and issues related to health advocacy, care, and promotion in a variety of cultural and community contexts. Part 3 comprises the work of adult educators from a number of different teaching contexts in higher education and health professions such as physiotherapy, nursing, and gerontology. These essays provide practical examples of how health and education are linked to teaching practice. In the concluding essay, English connects all of the examples presented in the book and elaborates on the implications for teaching and learning among health and education professionals.

The coverage of adult education theory and practice in this book is multi-faceted. For the most part, the book offers a comprehensive overview of predominant adult learning theories in adult education. However, the extent to which theory is explained in each essay varies significantly. Some authors explain the roots and uses and give examples of the underpinning theory of their work (see, for example, Pratt, Sadownik, & Jarvis Selinger; Kinsella, Caty, Ng, & Jenkins), while others use certain theoretical concepts or terms

without any explanation of their understanding of the theory. For example, a number of authors make reference to communities of practice to describe professional groups of practitioners. However, many authors neglect to discuss the elements of these practitioner groups that make them, uniquely, communities of practice. For the sake of readers who are unfamiliar with the term, it may have been beneficial if the book included a more complete definition in the glossary and/or if authors who have their own interpretation were accountable for explaining this in the context of their respective work.

The health and education issues discussed in this book are diverse and transcend the limits of specific cultures and professional disciplines. This volume will be a good resource for adult educators, in any capacity, who may be developing a repertoire of theory and practical examples to guide their own practice. Adult educators will likely find the case studies and teaching tips in most of the essays to be reliable and adaptable to their respective teaching and learning contexts. Some of these sources are brought together by adult educators and scholars such as Stephen Brookfield, Daniel Pratt, and Elizabeth Kinsella, all of whom have done a considerable amount of research on teaching in adult education. Furthermore, English, Coady, and Cameron (and many others) round out the quality of this volume with expertise in areas such as participatory community-based research and development/training in adult learning contexts. Collectively, these authors make a salient and insightful point: to fully understand health we must first acknowledge local knowledge and the social and cultural determinants that impact health.

Adult Education and Health is logically organized, well written, and, thus, easy to read. The authors' explicit references to other essays in the book were particularly helpful in tracking how English's adult health learning theory, as discussed in the introduction, was woven throughout the entire volume. This book makes a significant contribution to widening the knowledge base in the realm of health and learning because it challenges traditional modes of thinking about health education and suggests a critical paradigm shift in our view on *how* and with *whom* education is happening. Finally, this book makes a strong case for the benefits of incorporating interdisciplinary work between professions and community-generated knowledge into our solutions for promoting and educating for health.

Launa Gauthier
Mount Saint Vincent University

UNEARTHING CANADA'S HIDDEN PAST: A SHORT HISTORY OF ADULT EDUCATION

Michael Welton. Thompson Educational Publishing, Toronto, 2013, 232 pages.

This expansive book offers an important overview and a critical analysis of the history of adult learning and education. Providing more than a historical perspective, this book demonstrates how adult learning and the history of Canadian society are intertwined. It