

In the first of the two issue-based chapters of the book, Wong considers a major theme running through the chapters; faculty resistance to PLAR within universities. The relationship between university culture and faculty motivation is examined. Some clarity is provided on history and reasons for this resistance.

The final chapter, by Wihak and Wong, deals with research into PLAR in Canadian university adult education programs and indicates that there is a need for stronger theorization of PLAR within adult education departments. The authors also raise the issue of cost, indicating that sufficient resources are crucial for PLAR success within the mainstream of student services at Canadian universities.

In the Endword section, Friesen identifies a number of helpful questions that summarize the submissions within this book. He recommends a 'multivocal' approach to this emergent field, where multiple theories and methodologies are applied to PLAR, with a particular emphasis on descriptive, comparative and exploratory research.

In conclusion, as the use of RPL continues to grow, it is important that we take stock of the research that informs theory development, assesses government policies, and examines practice. This book provides important contributions in these areas. It is also important and timely that Thompson Rivers University has created the PLIRC to support international collaboration on RPL. I look forward to the next collection of articles on this subject that will provide further depth and breadth to our understanding of RPL. This can be achieved by building on the research analysis presented in this book, and by referencing research activities from other countries including those from the Global South.

Reference

Thomas, A. (2000). Prior Learning Assessment: The quiet revolution. In A. Wilson, & E. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bill Fallis

George Brown College

PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING CITIES AND REGIONS: POLICY, PRACTICE AND PARTICIPATION

Norman Longworth and Michael Osborne (Eds.). NIACE, Leicester, UK, 2010, 354 pages.

The notion of learning cities and learning regions has been promoted since the early 1990s as a framework to build community partnerships through lifelong learning initiatives. Despite a number of interesting and innovative projects, the learning city/region project has never lived up to the power and potential its proponents have hoped. Chief among learning city proponents has been Norman Longworth, who has written extensively about the notion and has developed and supported learning city initiatives around the world. *Perspectives on Learning Cities and Regions: Policy, Practice and Participation*, edited by Norman Longworth and Michael Osborne, is another attempt to create much needed interest in the idea of the learning city/region.

The volume is mostly a collection of reports outlining a variety of learning city and learning region initiatives taking place around the world. From Britain, Croatia, Italy, Zimbabwe, and many other locations, the reports provide an opportunity to assess the hurdles and methods for implementing community lifelong learning partnerships. On their own, the reports are generally well written, but the book as a whole has an inconsistent flow due to the wide variety of informants. A degree of confusion is also caused by the large number of acronyms used by contributors such as Gál, Doukas, and Storan. The need to remember what they stand for takes away from the quality of the reading.

There is also an inconsistency between the book's editors and the actual reports. The editors attempt to create a narrative of the learning city and learning region idea as a way to best use lifelong learning as a valuable community, social, and economic resource. However, the dominant theme of the book, or the narrative created by the report authors, is that learning cities and learning regions are best used as aids to economic development. This is a major stumbling block of the book and the learning city/region concept in general; although many proponents paint the learning city in humanistic colours, many of the models employed are business models that regard lifelong learning as an exploitable resource. As such, when presented to those in governance, lifelong learning will probably be seen as an economic resource with possible positive social spinoffs. While reading this book I was struck by how strongly much of the language is business-management-oriented, seen in terms such as "capital development" (p. 87), "horizontal cooperation" (p. 116), and "social capital" (p. 269). One of the three general categories the book is divided into – "Networking, Intelligence, and Resource Aspects of Lifelong Learning in Cities, Regions and Communities" – reads more like the network capitalism described by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2003) in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* than the idea of a learning society put forward in *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (1973), also known as the Faure Report.

Most of the reports and commentary in the book place the learning city initiative within a capitalist economic framework, but there is one place fighting against this as it seeks to free itself from the bonds of the Western economic structure, and that is Udaipur, India. Udaipur's learning city initiative is perhaps the most vital currently taking place, but it tends to run counter to the Western concept of education as it is taking a grassroots approach to building a learning city. Instead of a business model, it uses an unlearning framework to develop social justice and community building. Unlearning is a framework in which participants are encouraged to deconstruct prevailing societal norms and imagine new ways of producing society. Despite being mentioned in the introduction, Udaipur is not represented in any of the reports; this is unfortunate, as it could have provided a different context to imagine the learning city and learning region concept.

This book would have been strengthened by an analysis of why the learning city/region initiative is not having the impact its proponents would like it to have. Why has it not lived up to its power and potential? In many ways, *Perspectives on Learning Cities and Regions* comes across as a marketing pitch, with Longworth and Osborne making grandiose statements such as declaring the learning city movement to be "one of the most powerful regional development movements of the 21st century" (p. 230). A statement such as this requires a strong case to back it up, but the book simply does not provide the necessary support.

Overall, *Perspectives on Learning Cities and Regions* lacks the depth and rigour needed to justify the grandiose rhetoric Longworth and Osborne use to sell the concept. Missing from this book is an evaluation of why the idea has not taken root – an absence that perhaps provides a reason why the learning city is floundering. The notion of a learning city/region does have great power and potential, but until the core problems are realized, it will be little more than a marginal idea.

References

- Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, È. (2005). *The new spirit of capitalism*. Verso.
- Faure, E., Herrera, F., Kaddoura, A., Lopes, H., Petrovsky, A. V., Rahnama, M., & Ward, F. C. (1972). *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (7th ed.). Paris: UNESCO.

Scott MacPhail
Mount Saint Vincent University

THE HANDBOOK OF RACE AND ADULT EDUCATION

Vanessa Sheared, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Scipio A. J. Colin III, Elizabeth Peterson, Stephen D. Brookfield, and Associates. (2010). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2010, 416 pages.

Dealing with racially diverse experience in the context of adult and higher education is unavoidable in the classrooms of a globalizing and internationalizing world – and no more so than in the multicultural countries of North America, where the world has come to expect the liberating and equalizing experiences of adult education to create equities. This book is written for such a high calling of working with students in both informal and formal settings to deal with internalized and structural racism as part of the educational experience so that we, as educators, are not perpetuating the status quo but assisting in the transformation of educational contexts in which we work.

This volume is strategically developed by a powerhouse team of seasoned senior editors who have recruited heroic authors who are “experientially grounded” (pp. xxiv) in the American ethos of race relations and willing to expose themselves for our learning. Their academic expertise and experiential groundedness create a dynamic of engagement in the micro-environments where the issues and the questions reside. The senior editors construct a “safe frame” with their experience for our example as the questions are wrestled with in a dialogue around the kitchen table and then documented in the writing. The multi-faceted nature of the issues, elaborated by the nuanced experience of the lived lives, offers rich writings that are possibly the most valuable aspects of this volume.

The North American professoriate in the adult education community is not large, and it is clear that many of the people who collaborated around the kitchen table in this dialogue have known and worked with each other over the years. The racialized experience in the pre- and post-civil rights era is a theme between the senior editors and collaborators. Possibly North America was unique in that, both in the United States and Canada, race-based legislation impinged on equities in education and, hence, social mobility. Nowhere