

critical or postmodern qualitative research, particularly since a critical post-structural feminist theoretical framework informed the study. The selection criteria in this particular case seemed to focus more on how the research question was asked and the data collected and analyzed, with less significance on the researcher's positionality and its relationship to the research experience. Even though Merriam briefly discusses the reasons and challenges for her selection of the different approaches of qualitative research, I believe more explanation is warranted and necessary. Providing greater detail of how qualitative research has been organized in other texts and what qualifies a study for a particular approach would have not only offered greater clarity to Merriam's own choices, but would also shed light on the field as whole. Even though readers may find some of the selections confounding, the choice of approaches and related studies should promote a healthy debate and could ultimately lead to a greater understanding about the nature of qualitative research.

Overall, despite my minor concerns, I found the book an excellent addition to the teaching and learning of qualitative research, which will hopefully spawn other similar texts that will also provide insightful examples of research and practice accompanied by thoughtful reflective pieces.

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***LIFELONG LEARNING IN A CHANGING CONTINENT:
 CONTINUING EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF
 EUROPE, BY MICHAEL OSBORNE & EDWARD THOMAS***

NIACE (Ed.). (2003). Leicester, UK, 538 pages.

The European Union recently set itself the task of becoming the most dynamic, competitive knowledge-based economy within ten years. Consequently, education and training have become major foci of attention for governments, educators, and policy makers throughout Europe. In particular, continuing education and lifelong learning are being regarded as increasingly important, not least in the higher education sector, where many European universities are expanding their continuing education provision to provide the diverse programming needed by individuals, business, and society.

This book, the result of an extensive collaboration amongst European continuing educators, surveys these recent developments. Recognizing that information about university continuing education (UCE) is not as widely known or shared as it might be, the book details UCE provision in 30 countries of Western and Central Europe. The editors' intent is to stimulate a wider discussion from all involved in UCE and lifelong learning to help construct a "European space for Higher Education" and facilitate cross-country analyses. Each chapter addresses the national context of UCE in a specific country, examines the differing models and structural arrangements for its provision, describes the range of UCE activities, and explores possible future trends and developments.

What becomes clear from reading the country reports is the near-universal endorsement of the view that lifelong learning is a key factor for economic growth and adaptability and also enhancing social integration, tolerance, and democracy. In fact, more than half the countries surveyed have national policies that define and govern UCE, to at least some extent. Despite this, large international variations in university involvement exist. For example, in France, public institutions cater for only 5 per cent of the number of people enrolling in any form of continuing education or training. In Germany the figure is only half that while in Britain and the Scandinavian countries it reaches almost 10 per cent. In all these countries, the bulk of continuing education provision is provided by employers or private companies. So, European universities have been relatively unsuccessful at competing with private providers, perhaps because they don't always take continuing education as seriously as they might.

In general, continuing education has been a marginal activity in European universities. UCE has been traditionally regarded as essentially a profit-generating enterprise and secondary to the traditional missions of research and teaching. This is slowly beginning to change as more universities recognize that through their continuing education programs, they can fulfill an important outreach function by creating and maintaining close links with local business, cultural, and professional communities. Yet, wide variations in UCE approaches still exist within each country and between universities. For example, while the whole provision of certain universities—such as Britain's Open University or the Austria's Danube University Krems—can be classified as continuing education, many other universities provide essentially none. The editors regard such a *laissez-faire* approach as contrary to universities' own best interests. As an important part of formal education systems, universities play a key role in helping develop and

implement a system of lifelong education and providing a necessary organizational framework for its development. What universities teach, investigate, and promote influences knowledge, attitudes, and values in many areas of society. Noting that universities educate the people who will be influential in later shaping the development of society, Osborne and Thomas underscore that universities can play a significant role in local economic and social development by making education available to all sectors in society.

In documenting the extent to which lifelong learning has been institutionalized in European higher education, the book evinces just how far policies and research about UCE have developed in Europe as compared to North America. The number of national UCE networks is increasing: whereas ten years ago, only four national networks existed, today there are more than a dozen. International and inter-university cooperation is also on the rise with new partnerships developing regularly. One striking continent-wide network is THENUCE, formed with over 140 participating institutions. It has already produced a handbook about UCE provision, conducted several international research projects, helped establish a series of centres in Central Europe and the Baltic states, and promoted UCE more widely throughout all European countries.

UCE is a testing-ground for innovative practices, within both educational systems and educational institutions. This book documents some exciting projects and initiatives and provides a strong basis for cross-country and institutional comparisons. Of course, questions remain. Does the complexity and breadth of UCE provision prevent useful comparison of whole systems? What links exist between individual learner's ambitions, institutional plans, and national strategies for lifelong learning? Are the initiatives identified evidence of real structural change or have institutions and governments merely incorporated them within existing approaches? How can universities increase their provision while maintaining existing levels of high quality scholarship, research, and teaching? How far is lifelong learning meeting its social as well as its economic goals? Clearly, one book cannot answer such far-reaching questions. What this one does is reveal the need for systematic analysis and research to better ensure that lifelong learning becomes a practical reality within universities whatever their location.

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