

des outils fort utiles, s'assure également de fournir les éléments de compréhension qui les accompagnent et en rendent l'usage intelligent. Il y a d'abord une histoire de l'ingénierie, ce relativement jeune domaine, qui aide à bien le circonscrire. De plus chaque auteur s'est efforcé de définir les notions qu'il aborde et d'établir la syntaxe des démarches qu'il propose ou analyse. Il se dégage de toute cette troisième partie une invitation à une pratique éclairée de la formation. Il faut le signaler, surtout que la tentation est parfois forte de sur-instrumenter dans le but de complaire à certains praticiens inquiets d'apporter rapidement des réponses à des questions qu'ils n'ont pas toujours le temps de bien considérer. Le souci des directeurs de l'ouvrage de faire un travail théorique et pratique est respecté jusqu'à la fin. Qu'il s'agisse de nomenclatures de critères à respecter en formation, de schémas pour la formulation de politiques de formation ou des fonctions de l'ingénierie pédagogique, les données sont claires et les éléments essentiels toujours présentés avec justesse. Enfin, le chapitre qui porte sur les formations ouvertes nous permet de saisir cette nouvelle réalité en plus de constituer une mine de renseignements et de présenter une synthèse importante de méthodes, d'outils et de supports qui jusqu'ici se retrouvaient éparés dans la littérature.

Il ressort de l'ensemble de ce *Traité* que la formation existe distinctement. Elle se distingue de l'éducation des jeunes, d'une part et de la gestion des ressources humaines à laquelle elle participe de plus en plus activement, d'autre part. Il faut faire valoir pour preuve les modèles d'action clairs et fiables auxquels divers groupes de professionnels peuvent maintenant se référer et la construction d'une sorte de glossaire qui traduit, par la diversité et la précision des termes en usage, l'émergence d'une certaine professionnalité du domaine de la formation. Ce *Traité* s'inscrit à une période donnée de notre évolution sociale et il ne faut pas se surprendre d'y retrouver autant de références au travail et à la production des compétences, ce qui correspond au discours ambiant. Comme les directeurs du collectif le signalent en introduction, «en moins de 30 ans, nous sommes passés d'une vision sociale et humaniste de l'éducation permanente à une vision économique et réaliste de la production des compétences.» (p. 7). Dans 30 ans d'ici, il y aura sans doute un autre *Traité* à écrire sur la formation. Et d'ici là, peut-être, d'autres traités d'aussi bonne qualité sur d'autres milieux de pratique et d'autres clientèles du vaste domaine de l'éducation des adultes.

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MAELER'S REGARD: IMAGES OF ADULT LEARNING

Michael Newman (1999). Sydney, Australia: Stewart Victor.

In 1979, Michael Newman wrote that his aim in *The Poor Cousin* was to "describe the colour, variety and adventure available in adult education and to argue that adult education is often in the vanguard of educational experimentation..." (p. 3). Twenty-one years later, it seems to me that he has kept true to this vision of his role as an academic. It is encouraging, even

exciting, to read the writings of someone who still views his journey as an adventure, who can find the life and light and colour within that work, who continues to highlight the potential of adult education to make a difference, and who (fortunately for the reader) has the capacity as a writer to share the richness and texture of his intellectualisation.

When I began to read this book, I alternated between longing for more explicit references and tighter analyses, and being entranced by the stories, the metaphors, and the experiences that Mike drew from his long and international involvement with adult education activities. I soon realised, however, that this is more a book full of ideas, rather than a text full of references. The subtitle of "Images of Adult Learning" is an apt one, for Newman creates a portrait of adult learning rather than a stodgy analysis. The portrait is drawn lightly and it gives the impression that the ideas within it are simple, yet the 23 chapters cover some extremely sophisticated, contemporary, and important concepts. Some of these are evident in the titles of the eight sections: Experience, thinking, control, learning, people and practice, civil society, the adult educator, and intervention and struggle. Some are embedded within the chapters in which, for example, useful distinctions are made among complicity, alliances, and solidarity.

Newman's skill as an academic and writer is that he can explain these concepts and ideas not through an extensive literature review but rather through merging selected literature, theories and concepts, and real life experiences. More than in his several previous books, he seems to have given himself leeway to explore the richness of his experiences and to draw on his background as a tutor of creative writing classes. As a result, the text is alive and beguilingly easy to read. Once I let go of my expectations for the usual dry theorisations and analyses which I have come to expect of adult learning texts, I enjoyed the interwoven discussions of Greek choruses, Sartre, Habermas; the explicit descriptions (almost guidelines) for how to run specific workshop exercises; the definitions of complex concepts; the critical book reviews; and the intense and moving scenarios of adult education making a difference.

Although easy to read, the book becomes increasingly complex the more times it is read. This is particularly so if readers follow Newman's admonishment to adult educators to give "over all their attention to the other person, to what the other person is saying and not saying, to the other persons' gestures, to the other person's choice of words and mode of speaking, to the other person's mood, feelings, views, assumptions, values and ideologies" (p. 136). The book then becomes a model for the very ideas about critical thinking within it.

The case studies, poetry, and references to popular literature not only present a "theory (that) floats" (p. 215), they become heuristic devices for testing the theories. The lack of extensive literature, or the reduction of a theory or concept to stark basic elements become a challenge for further exploration rather than a definitive closure. In short, the book actually becomes praxis. It reflects on concepts and explores assumptions about the theory and practice of adult learning. It encourages adult education to be viewed as a vehicle for social resistance. It explores essential elements and presents some mechanics to create an active civil society.

Throughout, Mike never loses his connection between adults learning, adult educators, and their collaborative roles in fostering social justice. He maintains his emphasis on the active role which adult educators can play in creating a more just world. As he does so, he raises issues of class and gender; colour and ethnicity. He places unions in the forefront of social action and reminds readers of the important role of the adult educators within them. In sum, I find it hard to critique a book with a clear and unapologetic agenda, with which I so wholeheartedly agree. As Mike notes, there is an “instrumentalism that dominates adult education theory and practice in many educational arenas in many countries” (p. 214). Particularly in that context, I believe that Mike makes a useful contribution in his challenge to adult educators to strive for social justice.

Nevertheless, as Newman notes, it is “easy to romanticise” (p. 208), and there are two concerns that I have about this book. First, I think that the book misses an important point. “Critical adult educators may be easier to find (than post-modern adult educators)” but they are still rare as hen’s teeth. My experience is that the majority of those working with adults hold liberal or neo-liberal orientations. Sometimes these positions are informed, sometimes they are held in naivete. Although this book can be used to raise awareness around such issues, the use of particular case studies hints at a healthier commitment to use adult education as an oppositional force than exists in the larger milieu. I don’t condemn the book for this orientation, but it seems to me that the struggle to interest and engage adult educators in that approach needs to be acknowledged explicitly. Second, although the issue of colour is dealt with in South African contexts, I think a hearty connection to the separate concern of aboriginal issues would have strengthened the book.

Despite my few reservations, I found this book to be truly useful—that is, it informs; it uncovers political, social, and cultural forces; and it moves the reader to social action. It gives thought-provoking insights into both the theory and practice of adult learning. Because of its diverse presentations, it might be accessible for interested practitioners and certainly it is a good text for use in undergraduate and graduate classes. Its many layers would present good material for analysis. In conclusion, Newman once again presents us with a thoughtful and energising exploration of a facet of adult education. Our field is well served by an academic who dares to combine his intellectual abilities, his creativity, and his passion in his publications.

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