Book Reviews/Recensions

A HISTORY OF MODERN BRITISH ADULT EDUCATION

Roger Fieldhouse and Associates (1997). Leicester, UK: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

This is a very welcome and much needed history. In the preface Roger Fieldhouse states that "it does not seek to replace Thomas Kelly's [1962/1992] invaluable" history. But for many of us non-historians it will become the primary reference on 20th century British adult education. Why? Because it is simply a more balanced history. Fieldhouse contextualizes and explains; he subjects the claims of adult education to critical evaluation and analysis. The book does not have the detailed accumulation of material found in Kelly's work, but Fieldhouse does hone in on the issues and offers interpretations; in my opinion this is preferable to a text that essentially reflects the establishment perspectives.

A History of Modern British Adult Education has three underlying aims: to set the developments in a wider policy and ideological context; to examine its various forms and formulations; and to comment on the purposes of adult education. Fieldhouse shies away from directly reviewing these three underlying aims of the book but refers to them nonetheless. He achieves these aims by examining the development of differing aspects and providers of modern British adult education within dedicated chapters on a wide range of topics, such as local authority provision, literacy and adult basic education, the Workers' Educational Association, broadcasting and adult education, work, and women. The first one-fifth of the book contextualizes these focused chapters with a quick introduction to the "Historical and Political Context," a review of "The Nineteenth Century," and "An Overview of British Adult Education in the twentieth Century." These are very useful chapters; the first could have been fleshed out a little more, particularly for overseas readers, but the historical and socio-political context reappears throughout the chapters.

Roger Fieldhouse is the main author and compiler of the history. Half of the text is written by him; he has chosen other specialists to write particular chapters. Generally this approach works well, particularly in chapter 5 (Ian Martin, Community Education), chapter 10 (John McIlroy, Independent Working Class Education and Trade Union Education and Training), and chapter 15 (Roseanne Benn, Women and Adult Education). It works less well in chapter 11 (Naomi Sargent, The Open University), which comes across as

somewhat complacent—for example, Sargent ignores questions of closure associated with openness and access (see Harris, 1987). In chapter 9, on residential colleges, Fieldhouse chooses to work with Walter Drews, presumably to supplement Walter's expertise with Roger's historical approach. Although this works well enough, it could have been an even stronger chapter—given the symbolic importance of these institutions in the British context—if Fieldhouse had been the sole author of this chapter. The overview of voluntary agencies (chapter 12 by Peter Baynes and Harold Marks) is very useful but it only touches on some examples, such as prison education, which could have benefited from more discussion.

The final chapter summarizes the book with a past, present, and future format, which again demonstrates Fieldhouse's clear vision, detailed knowledge, and hands-on experience of the field. For North American scholars, I emphasize that this understanding comes from Roger having been a practitioner at the same time as professor of adult education. Any reader will certainly emerge with an understanding of the context, forms, institutions, and purposes of British adult education. However, Roger has spent so much of his life considering and defending the social purposes of adult education that he is perhaps guilty of not reviewing these purposes as thoroughly as he could have in the final chapter.

Fieldhouse claims that the divisions between vocational and non-vocational provision can be portrayed as artificial. The current favouring of vocational provision reflects the establishment belief that the central purpose of adult education is for the economy and not for participatory democracy—a point that could be teased out and its implications discussed a little more. I would have liked more discussion on workers' (particularly union) education, as the prime example of non-formal adult education, which Fieldhouse explains has been "the major social movement to become involved in adult education in Britain" (p. 397). As another personal reflection, I was privileged to work with Roger when he directed the extramural provision at the University of Leeds in the 1980s. Leeds was *the* place to serve an apprenticeship in British university adult education. This took place during a period of acute crisis for university adult education, which led John McIlroy and me to document the developments (see McIlroy & Spencer, 1988). I got the impression at the time that Roger, who was deeply and daily involved in survival strategy, questioned the value of our efforts. Therefore, it is gratifying to see that in chapter 8 he draws extensively on that account (is this a case of retrospective recognition of the apprentice by the master?).

Roger Fieldhouse is arguably the leading British adult education historian of our times. With this book he has written and compiled the most accessible, scholarly account of modern British adult education history. A history which influenced, and was influenced by, developments in Canada and elsewhere.

References

Harris, D. (1987). *Openness and closure in distance education.* Lewes, UK: Falmer Press.

Kelly, T. (1992). *A history of adult education in Great Britain* (3rd ed.). Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press. (First edition published 1962)

McIlroy, J., & Spencer, B. (1988). *University adult education in crisis.* Leeds, UK: University of Leeds.

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN CANADA (2nd EDITION)

Gordon Selman, Mark Selman, Michael Cooke, and Paul Dampier (1998). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

In the preface to the first (1991) edition of *The Foundations of Adult Education in Canada*, Gordon Selman and Paul Dampier identify themselves as "self-confessed Canadians" (p. viii); they point to the absence of a strong Canadian voice in the adult education literature as a primary impetus behind their writing the book. To address this situation, the first edition provides a general overview of the study and practice of adult education in anglophone Canada. As an introductory text, the first edition adds a welcome injection of Canadian content to the literature on adult education foundations. It also exhibits the same strengths and weaknesses often attributed to the Canadian character: reliable, moderate, and accessible, but somewhat lacking in edge and intensity.

Why a second edition? What's different about it (aside from adding Mark Selman and Michael Cooke to the authorial ranks)? In the preface to the second edition, the authors offer two main reasons why revisions are necessary. The first is that changes wrought in the 1990s have had a significant impact on the Canadian social fabric and the place of adult