

BOOK REVIEWS/RECENSIONS

ADULT EDUCATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Beverly B. Cassara (Ed.) 1990. London: Routledge

From the ferment and figment of "melting pot" theory to the musings of multiculturalism, the path to a comprehensive explanation of the American cultural mosaic has been a patchwork of scholarly endeavours. The renewed recognition of many cultures in American society has become the focus of attention for many educators and social scientists. Beverly B. Cassara attempts to provide us with yet another perspective—incorporating adult education in a multicultural society. As ethnic minorities, aboriginals, and newly-arrived immigrants form a significant part of American society, the provision of adult education in the form of adult-basic education, GED, and language training is essential for their meaningful participation in a democratic society. Cassara has brought together a number of chapters to raise questions about issues in the education of these minority groups.

This book contains twelve chapters with an introduction by the editor and an index at the end. The chapters are clustered into three parts: "dimensions of the problem", "past and present concerns of major ethnic groups", and "innovative approaches to practice and research".

Part one, which contains three chapters, discusses major terms and concepts such as cultural pluralism, multicultural education and linguistic minorities. In chapter one, Young Pai provides the reader with important explanations and definitions of key terms; however, the attempt to include Mezirow's "perspective transformation" appears to be a forced association and does not add to clarity or the importance of this chapter. While Tesconi Jr. (chapter two) and Graham and Cookson (chapter three) cover the meanings of multiculturalism and linguistic minorities in the United States respectively, the relationship between adult education and multiculturalism is not specifically addressed. Graham and Cookson attempt to tie linguistic minorities mainly to

immigration and use statistics from 1976, both of which detract from their main thesis.

Four chapters in part two deal with major ethnic groups highlighting some of their historical problems and present concerns. Morgan (chapter four) shows how adult education can help blacks in Manhattan to affirm their integrity and provide access to educational opportunity. She focuses on community-based efforts by church, civic and philanthropic groups to provide literacy and job training, general education, and the promotion of Afro-American culture. Tippeconic III (chapter 5) discusses the background and legislation for Indian education; he emphasizes the role of adult education in providing GED and ABE training. He sees the future as continuing the relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Montero-Sieburth's chapter (six) about the Hispanic adults is well-written, analytical, and focused. This is an excellent synthesis of a minority's problems and adult education principles resulting in programs for Hispanic adults which are required in the research literature. A consideration of the impetus derived from "community/grassroots" needs and Freire's approaches to literacy training and conscientization provides us with major questions in areas such as the distribution of adult education programs and equity issues. Nakanishi (chapter seven) decries the fact that the professional literature of adult education has given little attention to the needs of minority, immigrant, and refugee adult populations. He provides us with an overview of the diverse group known as Asian Pacific Americans, which now represents the greatest number of legal immigrants to the USA. Attempting to generate empowering skills in Asian immigrants and refugees, Nakanishi uses the concept of political resocialization leading to electoral participation as evidenced in voter registration. He calls on adult education to use its non-formal and formal approaches to assist this group to participate in the political process.

Part three contains five chapters and attempts to provide us with examples of adult education practice. Daniel and Daniel (chapter eight) consider theoretical perspectives such as reproduction theory, experiential learning theory, cognitive theory, and empowerment theory. They demonstrate the application of theory into practice by describing community-based adult education programs administered through the Northern Illinois University service centre in Chicago. Their major focus is education as a social change agent. Barer-Stein (chapter nine) shares her insights from using a phenomenological approach to research in experiencing the unfamiliar. She provides us with a unique approach to

discovering knowledge by focusing on the experiences of an ESL teacher. Reeves (chapter 10) uses a case study in health care to demonstrate the application of the “negotiated process” approach. While adult education principles are used in this process the author does not emphasize these in her analysis of this case study. Miller, Grove, and Hansel (chapter eleven) describe three cases in hosting an international exchange student. While the point is made that personality factors are more important than cultural differences in meeting inter-cultural challenges in these situations, it is not clear why this chapter was included in the book. Diaz-Lefebvre (chapter twelve) provides us with an excellent chapter on the “Hispanic adult learner in a rural community”. Here is an example of the integration (and use) of adult education principles with the essentials of defining and deriving meaning of ethnic identity by adult learners of Mexican descent. It is quite possible that this approach can be applied selectively to other majority groups.

It is not possible to provide full coverage of a very complex issue such as adult education in a multicultural society in one book. However, there are some areas that are crucial to an understanding of the role of adult education in multi-ethnic America, and the inclusion of these would have strengthened this book. For a very long time the myth of the “melting pot” held sway in American society; the shift to multiculturalism is an important one and should be explained. The roles of adult education in society should be highlighted—a major point being who participates. Since research shows that (a) the most numerous participants in adult education programs come from the middle class and (b) those who already have some schooling and training seek more, how can the poor (the majority ethnic group members and immigrants) participate in adult education programs? The chapters focus on the problems of minority groups; however, an area that needs attention is the education of the majority population about the problems of equity and social justice in a multicultural society.

In the United Kingdom, and to some extent in Canada, the move is now away from multiculturalism towards anti-racist education. It is crucial that adult educators recognize this and incorporate strategies for implementing anti-racist adult education for the sole purpose (if no other) of enhancing equity in and equality of access to education, training, and jobs. The ABE, ESL, and GED programs so often mentioned in this book are important, but adult education has to address some of the larger issues of ideology, hegemony, equality of results, and racism in a multi-ethnic society.

The effectiveness of this book could be increased if Cassara added a summary and conclusion chapter. Such an addition might include the major themes, the problems, and possible solutions raised in most of the chapters. Directions for research in this critical area and implications for public policy would enhance the potential for generating discussion, and hopefully provide a basis for action.

As Jarvis points out in the "editor's note" to this book, there have been few serious studies dealing with adult education and the multicultural society. While some of the chapters could have been replaced with more relevant ones, this book raises some important issues for public policy formulation. Adult educators who are interested in contemporary social change in a cosmopolitan community will be stimulated to think critically about the crucial roles of adult education in our multicultural society.

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ACTION AND KNOWLEDGE—BREAKING THE MONOPOLY WITH PARTICIPATORY ACTION-RESEARCH

Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Anisur Rahman (Eds.) 1991. New York: Apex Press

This is a major contribution to the liberatory tradition in adult education. This book is the culmination of many years work, in the first place, of two long time contributors to the literature. Orlando Fals-Borda, a Colombian scholar, activist and recently elected member of Colombia's Asamblea Constitucional, has worked mainly in Latin America, but knows the world. Mohammad Anisur Rahman, former professor of economics at the University of Dacca and now based in the International Labour Office in Geneva, has lengthy experience in Asia and Africa, and has published widely. In the second place, the book contains six *vivencias* or process studies of participatory action research (PAR) in the Americas, Asia and Africa contributed by long time practitioners in those continents. This then is a gold mine of *theory and practice*.

PAR is a major topic of debate throughout the world and is a cornerstone in the International Council for Adult Education. In a global sense, it was a creation of the South to off-set the dominance of the North. In the