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Book Review

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interested in a critique of the current neoliberal influence in lifelong learning and offers hopeful thinking for all of society, but especially for those citizens on the margins.

Cathy VanderVliet,
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PURPOSES OF ADULT EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION (3RD ED.)

Bruce Spencer and Elizabeth Lange. Thompson Educational Publishing, Toronto, 2014, 228 pages.

Spencer and Lange's 228-page book on the purposes of adult education provides a great introduction to the field of Canadian adult education. Seven chapters cover the topics of adult education foundations, the sociology of adult education, education for the economy, education for transformation, education for diversity, distance education, and education within a global context. As a beginning graduate student, I would have greatly benefitted from having a copy of Spencer and Lange's text as a resource, and have thus decided to write my review by describing how readers might want to approach this book.

1. *Use this as a reference book.* I was initially frustrated in reading the first few chapters, as they didn't seem to flow as a book. However, as I progressed in my reading, it dawned on me that this is more like an encyclopaedia or reference than anything else. And as a reference book, it works well. If you're interested in learning more about the Canadian political economy and the rise of neo-liberalism, read Chapter 7. If you want to know more about transformative learning, turn to Chapter 4. If you want to immerse yourself more in the debates, read the final discussions at the end of each chapter. These help to familiarize the reader with different positions on specific topics and present evidence to support and negate certain points of view.
2. *Realize that the book is about Canada but also much more.* When I first started reading, I was surprised at how the book went back and forth between focusing on Canada and then on adult education more broadly. The book lays out the main philosophical influences in adult education, such as behaviourism, liberalism, humanism, or radicalism, and introduces us to many of the key thinkers in adult education who are primarily American; e.g., Jack Mezirow and John Dirkx. It also speaks about historically important Canadian adult education movements, such as Antigonish and Frontier College. I wondered at times, though, why important Canadian adult educators weren't recognized. For example, in the discussion on new social movements, I was hoping to see the work of Budd Hall or Dip Kapoor mentioned. And this brings me to the next point:
3. *Recognize that while the book does a lot, it doesn't do everything.* Because there are so many concepts, ideas, and thinkers covered in this short book, you may start wondering why certain topics are covered in depth while others receive little to no attention. For example, I was very happy to see a detailed discussion on the differences between critical

theory and critical thinking (p. 81). To a scholar, this may appear obvious, but to new students this often isn't. At the same time, some concepts are introduced but not really explained; e.g., postmodernism, poststructuralism, positivism, or globalization. We read about what the Highlander School did under Myles Horton but don't read about what they've done recently in their work around environmental issues and LGBT rights. We learn a bit about the Sandinista literacy campaign of the 1980s but hear nothing about the new literacy campaign introduced by the current Sandinista government in 2009.¹ Moreover, we get a more thorough analysis of transformative learning than, say, popular education; we hear much more about old social movements and the role of labour education than we do about new social movement learning. And this speaks to my next piece of advice:

4. *Remember the authors!* I think it is very useful to be aware of the biases and expertise of the authors. Specifically, Elizabeth Lange has spent a great deal of time and energy thinking, researching, and reflecting on transformative learning. Similarly, Bruce Spencer has dedicated much of his life to the labour movement and labour education. In acknowledging this, it's much easier to forgive the book for its apparent omissions and biases. On this point, I was very pleased to see an upfront acknowledgment of the authors' position on adult education: "Life itself should be the fundamental subject matter of adult education and that adult education should teach people how to live, not just how to make a living . . . adult education is a social process, not a process of information transference." (p. 1). Remember this while reading.
5. *Note that while the book is generally accurate and well researched, there are a few claims without much evidence.* First, many statistical claims in the book have no citations. For example, we're told that "the richest 20% of the population, the superrich, now hold over 40% of all Canadian income" (pp. 56–57) and that "65% of all female lone-parent families live below the low income cutoff" (p. 115). I'd like to know where these numbers are coming from, to which time frame they refer, and, in the latter example, whether this is referring to Canada or more broadly. Second, there are a few other claims without much evidence. I'll highlight two instances: On page 76, the authors write, "Given the American context of security fears and constantly needed declarations of patriotism, some American writers have emphasized the individual as opposed to collective change." This sentence reads like security fears and patriotism cause American individualism in writing and research. The truth requires exploring the socio-cultural history and politics of the United States that help explain why libertarianism and neo-conservatism have taken such a hold in the country (see Giroux, 2006). In a second example, the criticisms of MOOCs are not really fair (p. 148). In particular, the authors fail to recognize the two distinct types of MOOCs: X-MOOCs, the type offered by Coursera, and C-MOOCs (or constructivist MOOCs), which, contrary to Spencer and Lange's claims, can and do operate according to adult education principles.

I want to reiterate that this is an important text and there really isn't anything quite like it. The book provides an overview of many significant ideas and historical developments in adult education in Canada and more broadly. I have not used it in classes, but friends who

1 See <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/04/nicaragua-literacy-campaign-changing-womenrsquot-lives/>

have report that students find this and Spencer's previous edition very useful. Along with Nesbit, Brigham, Taber, and Gibbs' *Building on Critical Traditions*, Spencer and Lange's text makes excellent required reading for graduate students in adult education in Canada.

References

- Giroux, H. (2006). *America on the edge: Henry Giroux on politics, culture and education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nesbit, T., Brigham, S., Taber, N., & Gibb, T. (Eds.). (2013). *Building on critical traditions: Adult education and learning in Canada*. Toronto. Thompson Educational Publishing.

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LIFELONG LEARNING, THE ARTS AND COMMUNITY CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Darlene E. Clover and Kathy Sanford (Eds.). Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 2013, 224 pages.

While the academic world is certainly warming up to qualitative research, for some scholars and the public the arts remain a niche interest that, more than other methodologies, seems to be questioned in terms of its rigour and its influence in academia. Editors Darlene Clover and Kathy Sanford are prepared to take on this project, advocating for an infusion of arts-based programming in universities worldwide. They split the volume into traditional academic divisions: teaching and learning, research and enquiry, and community engagement, but this is where adherence to tradition seems to end. Each of these categories contains several contributions, resulting in an eclectic and informative balance of perspectives. The introduction provides background while the final "overlay" brackets the volume, creates context, and synthesizes the final "messages, threads, and tensions" (pp. 175–87).

The first section of the book, "Arts-based teaching and learning," is the most densely populated, with contributions ranging geographically from British Columbia, Africa, the UK, and Scandinavia, while at the same time reaching across the knowledge gulf to connect with all types of students, including marginalized learners. In their chapters, the authors describe projects as diverse as theatre, arts and crafts, and the study of literature. Resonating quite strongly is the use of arts-based learning that involved learners who did not consider themselves to be artists at all. In fact, some of the instructors would not describe themselves as artists either. Instead, the production of an art "piece" seems to destabilize traditional ideas of what teaching and learning are, thus allowing the participants the freedom to think in different ways about what the art represents, often in terms of social justice and community.

In one particularly poignant scene in the chapter by Astrid von Kotze and Janet Small, small groups worked on constructing mobiles from available art supplies. As this activity