BOOK REVIEW
ADULT EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN CANADA: ADVANCING A CRITICAL LEGACY


What even is ‘adult education’? If you identify as an adult educator, chances are you have been asked this question, perhaps more than once. Like me, you may find it challenging to provide a clear answer that satisfies the curiosity of the questioner. While they do not provide a simple ‘elevator pitch’ response, by compiling the collection of chapters that comprises Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Canada: Advancing a Critical Legacy, editors Susan M. Brigham, Robert McGray and Kaela Jubas have done an excellent job of developing a rigorous, critical, and wide-ranging answer to this perennial question. Not only does this compilation offer a provocative reply as to the definition of adult education, it also builds a compelling case as to why adult education is vital in a contemporary society marked by inequality and increased precarity on various fronts. Written within an academic and policy context in which the very idea of learning outside of formal education is highly suspect and marginalized, this book offers an important future-facing argument for the continued study and practice of adult education in Canada and globally.

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Canada comprises five sections. Each section contains several chapters, for an impressive total of 32. Equally impressive is how the editors have brought together a very diverse set of 43 contributors from across Canada. By blending the voices of early and mid-career academics with those of seasoned scholars and practitioners from the field, the book offers perspectives on a remarkable assortment of areas of concern to adult educators as they negotiate an uncertain future. In keeping with the dominant adult education scholarship in the Canadian context, this book is firmly situated in the critical tradition, and all chapters offer a critique of power in the interest of advancing social and political transformation.

With this commitment to critical pedagogy firmly in place, the first section, titled ‘Ways of Knowing and Being’, offers an important reflection on how adult educators can and must engage with epistemological and pedagogical approaches that emphasize the experiences of marginalized communities of learners. With this in mind, this section offers a critique of Western philosophical assumptions that for too long have been at the centre of the educational field. Most notably, this section begins with three chapters that, together, offer a highly topical reflection on lifelong learning and the praxis of truth and reconciliation, thereby addressing a major gap in adult education practice and scholarship. In doing so, the book thereby responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and places decolonizing education as a key part of the reconciliation process. The remaining
highly recommended for scholars, university students, and practitioners, both novice and old-timers, in Canada and globally.

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