

References

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PROMISES OF FREEDOM: CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

R.H. Fryer. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, England, 2010, 271 pages.

R. H. Fryer, teacher, scholar, and policy maker, has been deeply involved in programs supporting lifelong learning for adults in the United Kingdom for many years. A recent post as chief learning advisor to the Department of Health followed his time as national director for widening participation in learning, when his focus was on increasing access to learning in the National Health Service. Fryer has published several books in the areas of lifelong learning, social and cultural history in Great Britain, political science, and labour relations. *Promises of Freedom: Citizenship, Belonging and Lifelong Education* is published by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, a British organization dedicated to supporting lifelong learning for adults through work with a diverse population of learners, government employees, volunteers and charities, and others.

This informative book provides a historical overview of policies and initiatives designed to promote learning for citizenship in a British context. The 12 chapters explore the principles required to develop a foundation of learning for citizenship in Britain specifically, and delve into dialogues around notions of citizenship, belonging, and identity—hotly contested and malleable in lifelong learning theory and research. Originally developed as an inquiry into the future of lifelong learning, this work is a rich and valuable contribution to literature regarding education and citizenship in a globalized world. Fryer writes with purpose, experience, knowledge, and the tangible goal of creating opportunities for adults to become active citizens through learning opportunities.

An introductory chapter sets the tone for the book, as Fryer outlines his purpose “to explore the principal ideas and debates in the published literature on citizenship and belonging, and their relationships with lifelong learning, with the aim to acquaint readers with some of the main theories, concepts and arguments pertaining to our three linked themes” (p. 2). The themes (citizenship, belonging, and lifelong learning) are chosen for their importance in everyday life and for their connection to emancipation and liberation. Learning as a way of challenging oppression and discrimination, while supporting active citizenship, is a premise of this book and is discussed in Chapter 2. Chapters 3 and 4 address

the shifting concepts of citizenship and belonging (linked with identity), followed by a focus on the politics behind these concepts in Chapter 5. Here Fryer addresses diversity, democracy, the women's movement, globalization, and knowledge information, while drawing upon the work of theorists such as Habermas and Welton.

Chapters 6 through 9 broadly cover the current debates and discussions about social change, citizens as consumers, influence of capitalist values, trade unionism, inclusion, technology and knowledge mobilization, and formal education pedagogy and curriculum. Fryer talks about UK trends in education such as the "democratic school," whereby the "Institute for Citizenship has developed and made available curriculum materials, practical guides and examples that enable school pupils not simply to understand better the challenges and implications of such issues as 'representation', 'accountability' and 'constituency', but also to take some practical part in their own schools' decision-making and formulation of policy" (p. 170). Cooperation and awareness in formal education settings are important, as Fryer believes that citizenship and the skills required for active citizenry are learned as opposed to bestowed upon individuals.

Chapter 10 presents some of the issues and concerns inherent in writing about such malleable concepts as citizenship, belonging (and identity), and lifelong learning. Fryer states that each concept provides more than enough material for a complete book, but the focus here is on the relationship between the concepts. One suggestion from a reader's standpoint would be to include contributions from other authors representing diverse experiences. Fryer is the sole author and therefore the work represents his particular framework and lens. It would also be valuable to see a comparison of British policies and practices with those in other countries.

Chapters 11 and 12 conclude this clearly written proposal of learning for active citizenship with "a call for determined and urgent effort to push these matters [of citizenship, belonging, and identity] centre stage in lifelong learning, perhaps for the first time in nearly a century" (p. 186). Lifelong learning, originally dedicated to challenging systems of oppression and promoting community engagement, has fallen under the influence of capitalism, marketplace values, and education for a productive workforce. Through 13 principles that clearly map out a plan for citizenship education, Fryer proposes a shift back to learning that promotes a liberatory, diverse society. Drawing upon the work of critical theorists such as Brookfield and Giroux, Fryer supports his thesis that "citizenship, lifelong learning and, perhaps most of all, belonging, also share a commitment to the encouragement and enhancement of *human agency*" (p. 201, emphasis in original).

As a contribution to the literature regarding lifelong learning, citizenship, and belonging, this book not only provides a broad overview of the past, but also creates the foundation of a path for the future. While other perspectives could add to Fryer's work, this book would be of value to a diverse audience of educators, scholars, theorists, government employees, policy makers, and individuals with interest in issues of citizenship. Clear, concise, and engaging, this book provides hope for the future of lifelong learning and promises of freedom.

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