

The excellent chapters by Welton leave out important questions concerning the articulation of difference in a critical adult education discourse. I think that to some degree Welton is caught in the acrimonious debate that has characterized Franco-German intellectual relations for a long time. A critical appropriation of postmodernist and poststructuralist theories may help to fill gaps in critical adult education theory particularly in dealing with language theory and articulation of difference. Some of the authors in the book made observations in the same line of thought.

In general, the chapters do not contain a theoretical reflection on practice. A critique of popular education practices and other community initiatives, for example, would help to clarify reasons for their marginality. A theoretical reflection on practice would generate new theoretical questions. Collins does open doors in that direction (p. 97).

Finally, throughout the book, there is very little consideration of feminist theories—including feminist educational theories—in relation to critical adult education. Hart made a good effort but her chapter seems somewhat disconnected from the rest. Welton shows in his concluding comments a degree of uneasiness with Hart's chapter. He says, without elaboration, that Hart does not provide us "with a social theoretical justification and dialectical argument for her defense of motherwork." In fact, she does, but mainly from a feminist perspective with which one may agree or disagree. He asked for historical evidence of the revolutionary implications of the idea of motherwork. What about the evidence to support his own paradigm or the workings of critical adult education theory? In fact, Hart's chapter is more historically grounded than any other chapter. After closing this very rich and powerful book I was left with some discomfort, memories of discourses that subsumed gender and race into major projects but left women and minorities almost invisible, almost voiceless.

I am certain that this book will generate a powerful intellectual debate in the adult education community. The debate will help further to clarify the very notion of critical adult education.

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THE DESIGN OF EDUCATIOH (2nd Edition)

Cyril O. Houle (1996). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

If men and women learn in countless situations in all aspects of their lives, either alone or with some kind of guidance, it becomes hard to grasp the scope of adult education and difficult to guide and direct it. But if the situations in which it occurs can be reduced to a manageable number of prototypes,

vagueness and generality of approach can be replaced by a sophisticated conception of form and structure that gives some unity to the field despite its institutional divisions. (p. 170-171)

In this second edition of *The Design of Education*, intended "for everyone deeply interested in the nature or improvement of adult learning" (p. xvi), Cyril O. Houle outlines once again his method of categorizing educational activities for adults and sets forth his model or framework for creating a program plan or design. The first part of this system entails determining to which of the 11 categories (C-1 to C-11) a learning activity belongs. The categories are broken down into those that occur on an individual (C-1 and C-2), group (C-3 to C-6), institutional (C-7 to C-10), or mass (C-11) basis. Once the specific category has been identified, the next step involves developing a program through the process of applying Houle's basic framework to the learning activity and the circumstances in which it occurs. The components of this **adult educational framework** include:

1. Identifying an educational activity.
2. Deciding to proceed.
3. Identifying and refining objectives.
4. Designing a suitable format.
5. Fitting this format into larger life patterns.
6. Putting the plan into effect.
7. Measuring and appraising the results.

Although described in a stepwise progression, Houle stresses that these components should be viewed as interrelated and interacting, and not as a sequential progression.

Compared to the 1972 edition of *The Design of Education*, some notable changes will be found in this new edition, including certain chapter revisions and Houle's reference to current literature in the area of adult education. His first chapter, entitled "Credos and Systems," has also been updated to include discussions of more recently developed systems, models, and their proponents.

This edition does not contain a "Bibliographic Essay," as in the 1972 edition. Houle states that the reason for its deletion is due to the 1992 publication of his book *The Literature of Adult Education: A Bibliographic Essay*, which "deals so fully with all aspects of program design, development, and execution" (p. 263) that this section no longer seems necessary.

Throughout the text, Houle emphasizes the importance of taking the participants into consideration when designing a program, to the extent that, in some cases, "a complete design is not possible until after the activity begins...so that the participants can help determine its pattern" (p. 231). He also asserts that, if necessary, "the abstractness of the plan must be altered in terms of the concreteness of reality confronted" (p. 230); again underscoring his very pragmatic approach to program development.

The greatest limitation of *The Design of Education* (2nd ed.) is its tendency to be too general. It could not be used as a "how to" guide or a reference manual for program design, development, or evaluation. What it does instead, as mentioned above, is provide, throughout the text, reference sources for various topics under discussion. For example, he makes only a passing mention of "needs assessment" (it is not even in the glossary!) although he does make reference to a book that covers it in depth.

To some extent, the book is not very "reader friendly," as the reader must always refer back to the descriptions of the 11 categories or to the glossary (presented in two forms: (a) As a summary of the book using key terms in context; and (b) as an alphabetical listing and explanation of terms) for the definitions he has assigned to certain commonly used words such as "episode," "act," and "situation." Other drawbacks of the book are that: (a) It tends to be somewhat disjointed, with key points of information on a topic dispersed throughout the text; (b) its chapter devoted to case studies, used expressly for the purpose of description and analysis, is a bit short on analysis; and (c) many of the cases and examples are dated.

On the other hand, assuming one is familiar with the principles of program planning and evaluation and has read other texts or articles on the subject, it is a good book to add to one's program planning collection due to its unique adult learning perspective and the fact that, despite its lack of detail, it is quite comprehensive. Questions which arose while reading the book were answered (or you would know what to read to find the answer). For this reason, it is recommended that the book be read in its entirety.

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ASSESSING NEEDS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Donna S. Queeney (1995). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is about the practicalities of conducting needs assessments that effectively inform program planning decisions. Beginning with the premise that "whatever our purpose, needs assessment can help us achieve it by providing information that enables us to offer programs that meet our definition of success" (p. xi), Queeney deftly sidesteps much of the theoretical ambiguity and ideological controversy surrounding the concept of need. These issues are not avoided entirely, and, in particular, the final chapter includes consideration of ethical and political dimensions of assessment; however, by concentrating on the pragmatics of assessment, Queeney, perhaps inevitably, oversimplifies the concept of need and overstates the power of needs assessment. To illustrate, in the final chapter,