

Adult Education and Adult Learning, by Knud Illeris (1st English ed.). Malabar, FL: Krieger, 2004. 245 pp., \$39.50 (hardcover).
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The stated intentions of *Adult Education and Adult Learning* by Knud Illeris are three-fold: (a) to draw an adequate holistic picture of adult education and adult learning; (b) to provide a professionally and scientifically founded contribution to the understanding of key matters, contexts, and problems within the field; and (c) to communicate a message that has emerged from the author's respect for and empathy with the requirements for participants' occupational continued learning and competence development.

The author in his viewpoint seeks to clearly articulate what he understands as adult learning, adult education, and adult. Adult learning is the way adult persons in society make any permanent change in their "rational, bodily, emotional and social capacity" (p. 22). An adult is one who regards herself or himself as self-regulating by functioning independently, capably, and responsibly. Adult education is education courses for participants who return to an institutionalized education or training program.

The book is very logically organized. The author structures the book in four parts with 16 chapters, as he perceives the practice of adult education with a double point of departure: the societal location, background, and functions and the participants, their learning options, life situation, and interests. Part 1 looks at adult education as a social function. Part 2 deals with adult learning. Part 3 addresses the practices of adult education programs. Part 4 sums up and rounds off the contents and positions of the book. All of this is presented within the background and context of the author's more than "30 years of engagement in research, development work, teaching, teacher training and debate about adult education and learning" (p. 9).

The concept of competence is a crucial area in which the author is attempting to contribute new thinking and new understanding. Instead of walking away from or dismissing the concept of competence, as some have done in the field of adult education, the author seeks to present a new concept of competence in which a person masters a professional area, uses her or his assessments and attitudes, is able to draw on personal qualifications, and applies them effectively to an uncertain and unpredictable societal situation. He infuses competence with a countermeasure that equips individuals with the "courage to go against the status quo and imagine that things can be different" (p. 72). This countermeasure he calls "resistancy" (p. 55) and conceives it as "a counter competence" (p. 75), which aims toward understanding how one's world is structured and how he or she is placed in it and may influence these contexts with a coherent capacity for working with and against the many challenges we all face.

If the concerns of humanity and sustainability are to be an effective counterplay of the established market society, there will need to be able people, inwardly at the personal level and outwardly in their activities, to say "stop" and resist or even reject some choices with which people are constantly confronted. Adult education and adult learning need to be the major players in developing this countercompetence of resistancy in the participants, communities of practice, and society.

The author documents very well throughout the book the depth of his research and the foundation of his discussing the various topics. One illustration of his excellent scholarship is on the topic of tacit learning. Originating with the Hungarian British philosopher Michael Polanyi, the relationship between the conscious and unconscious is explained by references to neurological researchers Anthony Damasio and Joseph LeDoux. It is further explained by a citation from Freud. Added to that is an extensive quote from Ole Vedfelt, a Danish psychologist and psychotherapist. Then the author uses a metaphor of learning to ride a bicycle for illuminating the balance between the conscious and subconscious. These kinds of citations are replete throughout the book, accompanied with penetrating analyses and extensive narrative discussions by the author, regarding the direction needed and contribution desired from adult education and adult learning and their potential contribution to our world society.

One major weakness of the book (which may have come from the difficulty of translating words and meanings from one language to another) is the long, intricate, complicated sentences that the author uses in his writing style to explain many of his thoughts and viewpoints. Breaking these into shorter sentences in some instances could eliminate the necessity for slowly rereading the text many times to gain understanding. Nevertheless, this book is an extremely important must-read for any adult educator who is interested in being involved in the future shaping of adult education and adult learning as a field of study and practice. Although one may not agree with all of the author's ideas, it will raise cogent questions and provoke serious thought while offering some constructive and exciting challenges. The author's treasure of extensive experience in both research and practice of adult education and adult learning is obvious.

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