

There is little doubt that Castner has provided geography and social studies teachers with a truly innovative approach to their work. While this methodology is based on a lifetime of research, the true test of Castner's ideas will require their widespread deployment in classrooms.

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Cranton, P. (1992). *Working with adult learners*. Toronto: Wall & Emerson, 234 pp., \$19.50 (softcover).

In the Preface of *Working with Adult Learners* Patricia Cranton sets the challenge for herself to provide practical information for adult educators within a theoretical context. She states that her intent is to go beyond "recipes" and to translate the complexity of adult education into useful information for practitioner/educators who wish "to reflect on their work and to develop their own informed theory of practice" (p. xi). While these are laudable goals, in a short text they necessitate considerable insight, a delicate balance, and an integration of theory and practice.

To use Cranton's words, the first three chapters describe "the broad array of theoretical foundations, learner characteristics, and educator roles" (p. 207). The approach she has taken is to describe briefly a broad array of topics commonly found in introductory adult education texts. In the first chapter, "Theoretical Framework," Cranton begins with a three-page introduction to the field of adult education and then provides an overview of several psychological and educational theories. In an attempt to "provide an organizational framework and a means of identifying the assumptions that underlie practice" (p. 19) she presents a model for working with adult learners. A one-page discussion of the model's connection to the previously discussed theories ends the chapter.

While the author does document important theory and provides a needed organizational framework, I see several difficulties with this chapter. First, there is no apparent rationale as to the selection of, and relationship among, the various theories. In defence of the author, she states that the field is new and complex and therefore, that "integration of these concepts is indeed difficult" (p. 19). However, we are left with an array of disjointed theories and a model (really a typology) that provides little integration or the means for a novice in the field to identify assumptions that underlie practice (her second goal). Given the numerous times throughout the book that readers are referred to other works for a "fuller account," it is apparently their responsibility to search out and make sense of this enormously diverse literature base. Unfortunately, little help is given to the reader in making connections and recognizing important themes.

In chapter 2 a range of topics related to the adult learner is presented. While most of the topics and issues are relevant and important and presumably evolve from the organizational model of chapter 1, they still lack coherence. The author states that the learner characteristics discussed overlap and interact with each other; however, she gives few examples of this interaction. An example is the inclusion of psychological types. On the surface this is interesting but Cranton does not clearly state how this theory is integral to adult education. In particular, psychological type has not been critically addressed, nor have its validity and importance to the field been discussed. This is in contrast, however, to the section on Self-Directedness where Cranton insightfully discusses dilemmas and misconceptions of self-directed learning (SDL).

As the readers move into the book they will find that the depth of discussion and analysis increases. In chapter 3 Cranton provides an extensive and worthwhile analysis of adult educators' roles. Her important message is that there is no one role or persona that the adult educator performs regardless of content or context. However, it is not clear why adult educators do or should "move from other-directed learning, through self-directed learning, to mutually-directed learning" (p. 68). This does not seem to be a logical progression or continuum. Also, it would appear that the author lost an opportunity to explore more explicitly and extensively

the reflective practitioner role as the integration of all the roles. While Cranton does say that it is "more of a 'meta-role'," it is simply presented as one of 11 other distinct roles.

In the second part of the book Cranton focuses more upon practical concerns. The fourth chapter on implementing SDL is the strongest and most useful one. The author clearly has had much experience with implementing SDL. She provides insights into SDL's goals, processes, confusions, and pitfalls. Also strong is chapter 5 which focuses on transformative learning. She explains that transformative learning goes beyond a purely SDL approach in order to question assumptions, values, and beliefs. She explores very well, through a variety of steps and approaches, the process of working toward transformative learning.

What happens when practice does not proceed according to theory? Dealing with the unexpected is the focus of chapter 6. A selection of difficult situations that commonly occur are presented along with some suggestions for resolution. This provides a realistic representation of the teaching-learning transaction and emphasizes the need for judgment and reflection in action. In the last chapter she discusses the responsibility of the adult educator to develop a theory of practice and stresses its importance.

Cranton describes the theoretical development of the field of adult education in terms of constructing a building. She states that, "What we will do here is to describe some of the walls in the basement and some of the rooms in the building" (p. 4). While she has described some of the walls and rooms, few of the connecting passages between the rooms are described. Without such connecting passages a coherent structure cannot exist. These connections are essential in assisting the adult educator to develop and integrate an explicit theory of practice.

In terms of the goal of translating theoretical "complexity into useful information for the practitioner" (p. xi), Cranton has only been marginally successful. While the discussion and analysis of practice in the second part of the book are very good, the integration of the theoretical framework is

uneven and somewhat fragmented. I suspect the novice adult educator may be somewhat overwhelmed and confused with the array of disjoined theories. However, these comments notwithstanding, this book is a worthwhile resource for providing adult educators with practical information and at least an awareness of the range of theories related to the field of adult education. In the final analysis the most important message is that there are no simple answers and prescriptions when it comes to the professional practice of adult education. Each of us is responsible for the continued development of our own personal theory of practice.

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