

Mader, W. (Ed.). (1992). *Adult education in the Federal Republic of Germany: Scholarly approaches and professional practice*. (M.G. Haindorff, Trans.). Vancouver: Centre for Continuing Education, The University of British Columbia in cooperation with The International Council for Adult Education. 257 pp., \$20.00 (softcover).

It used to be a persistent criticism of adult education as an area of scholarly enquiry that it was undertheorized, obsessed with immediate practical issues such as student participation and teaching techniques, and cut off from developments in academic disciplines that had the potential to give it a more sophisticated conceptual framework. While considerable strides have been made in this regard in recent decades, adult education studies remains largely on the margins: It represents something in the nature of an optional extra for students of educational studies and for disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, and psychology. In career terms, the study of adult education tends to be conducted by those who have been practitioners rather than as a specialization for scholars within the academic disciplines.

The fact that such an evaluation relates to English-language writing on adult education is rarely mentioned. This publication, in effect an overview of the theory and intellectual history of adult education in the Federal Republic of Germany, indicates a more vibrant relationship between theory and adult education practice, and describes career trajectories that develop from the traditional disciplines of sociology, philosophy, and psychology to embrace adult education research, reflection, and teaching. It contains sections on the professionalization of adult education, the emancipatory traditions of labor and feminist programs, the relationships between the social science disciplines and adult education, and theoretical and methodological paradigms including experiential and biographical approaches. There is also a useful appendix providing information on continuing education legislation and on adult learning programs at the University of Bremen where the publication was prepared.

Readers accustomed to the mainstream English-language discourse on adult education will be immediately struck by the attention to conceptualization and, in particular, by the level of discrimination and refinement in this regard. This is manifested in relation to a number of themes including social analysis, critical theory, pedagogical practice, and participant experience. Those who might be inclined to question the necessity for such conceptual elaboration and to quibble about hair splitting should be reminded of the power of atom splitting! They will certainly find the theoretical elaboration of the different conceptualizations more penetrating: There is no recourse to cliché or slogan and no ritual quotations from vogue thinkers. This is true of the overall level of analysis throughout the various chapters and isn't confined to any isolated contribution. What is in evidence is a distinctive and self-confident tradition of analysis, reflection, and representation in relation to adult education. The source of this intellectual sophistication and self-assurance is identifiable in a novel feature in which contributors declare some of the intellectual influences on the development of their ideas as footnotes to their chapters. Some of these are predictable: Marx, Gramsci, Williams, Bourdieu, and Habermas, though they often emerge in unfamiliar guises. But Weber, Nietzsche, Socrates, Kant, and the Frankfurt school in general, as well as specialities as diverse as philology, industrial sociology, and theology, also surface in the intellectual biographies. The contributors appear secure in their scholarship as if conscious of their intellectual pedigree. If any criticism is to be levelled at this collection, it must be the apparent insulation of the discourse from bodies of scholarly inquiry on adult education other than those from continental Europe. Surely, readers would benefit from knowing what the writers make of the issues, methods, and concepts of English-language scholarship on adult education.

In a short review it is invidious to select any particular chapter for specific mention. However, a number of contributions had special appeal for me because of my personal research interests. Gieseke's chapter on feminist target groups is wide in its coverage and is particularly informative on a number of German and Italian women's programs. Most of the issues raised are familiar but they are treated in an open, inquisitive manner. The emancipatory commitment remains undiluted but the existence of

tensions and doubts as to strategy, method, and the personal/political nexus are acknowledged and confronted. In using the biographical method Gieseke wonders how much pain one is entitled to cause in a learning process which is not therapeutic if women are to gain self-awareness and courage in relation to their own destinies. How can one find a way to correct a past life-course without putting into question the totality of that life, thereby endangering the self? Gieseke concludes that if all past life is to be called into question, and at the same time the limitations imposed by society prevent a fresh beginning, then "the road to a new identity is bumpy."

In Holzapfel's treatment of experiential approaches there is an exposition of the ideas of Oskar Negt on the topic. Negt focused his writings initially on workers' education though they have a wider application. His ideas on the life world of workers, their experience and interpretations, and their unstructured situation are theoretically challenging and deserve a more comprehensive translation. I was particularly interested in his adoption of the concept of "social topoi" defined as "interpretative models of social reality," "forms of thought or language, idioms, cliches, stock phrases, commonplaces." These models of social reality, he points out, are neither mere prejudices nor accidental opinions in that they are usually based on collective experiences of groups and classes. They have an ambivalent function for the raising of consciousness in that on the one hand they protect against integration into the "ideology of a levelled middle-class society," while on the other hand they contain components which support a reification of thinking and a retardation of the penetration of ideology. Holzapfel uses Bernstein's distinction between formal and public speech to point to the limitations imposed by the linguistic patterns of workers in allowing expression of what is individually meant rather than which is culturally imposed. In drawing implications for educational practice, Negt dismisses "partisan instruction": "It is much more important to unfold (in the medium of formal language and empirico-scientific knowledge) the experiential contents not yet explicit and the experiences bound up in solidary communications" p. 173.

The daunting task of translation was performed with commendable efficiency by Martin G. Haindorff. It nonetheless remains an obvious translation with the style heavy and the terminology intrusive in passages. But that is to judge the translation by the very high standards that Haindorff sets for himself in an introductory note.

Adult Education in the Federal Republic of Germany is published in the series of Monographs on Comparative and Area Studies in Adult Education edited by Jindra Kulich. All involved are to be congratulated on their initiative in bringing the work of adult educators in other languages to English-speaking colleagues who, judging by this publication, are clear beneficiaries.

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Kach, N. & Mazurek, K. (Eds.). (1992). *Exploring our educational past*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 213 pp., \$18.95 (softcover).

This collection of essays represents a tribute to the 25th anniversary of the Department of Educational Foundations and to the 50th anniversary of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The authors included here were all associated with the Department at one time, and their work illustrates the scope and diversity of scholarship developed there. Consequently, this collection does not provide an overview or a sustained analysis of education in Alberta; the 10 essays illustrate the interests and interpretations of various historians.