

Review of *The Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, 2020 Edition*

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The Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, 2020 Edition is a nearly 500-page text that provides a comprehensive overview of the knowledge, practices, and research in adult and continuing education. The book's overall purpose is to inform scholars, practitioners, learners, and policymakers about the complexities of adult learning in education. It is divided into five sections with the chapters in each section connected by a central theme.

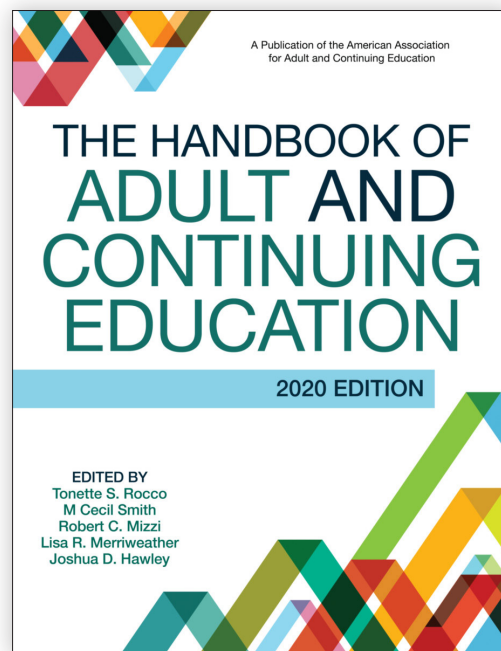
Section one, Foundations, describes the key principles, debates, and developments that demonstrate current grounding in the field today. Section two, Understanding Adult Learning, examines adults as students, clients, stakeholders, and consumers of knowledge and incorporates specifics of contemporary and historical theory. Section three, Teaching Practices and Administrative Leadership, provides useful information about program

implementation, program development, and teaching practices for adults. Section four, Formal and Informal Learning Contexts, focuses on the application of adult and continuing education practices in a wide variety of learning contexts including newer focus areas. The fifth and final

section, Contemporary Issues, addresses building stronger and more resilient learning communities against the backdrop of current social, cultural, and political contexts.

The volume is made up of 46 chapters plus an introduction, a conclusion, and an epilogue written by the editors. Each chapter follows a predictable structure with subheadings that aid in skimming for specific information. Chapter authors offer adult educators

and researchers specific guidance on theories, practices, and perspectives that can guide current and future research and practice connections.



Rocco, T. S., Smith, M. C., Mizzi, R. C., Merriweather, L. R., & Hawley, J. D. (Eds.). (2020). *The Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, 2020 Edition*. Stylus. 480 pages, \$135.00, hardcover. ISBN: 9781620366844

Evaluation

The editors, together with the chapter authors, have successfully accomplished their stated goals of informing the field and forging connections among scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. While the volume is well-organized and clearly presented, it does not sacrifice theoretical breadth and depth. This text will not appeal only to scholarly audiences, as it thoughtfully examines implications of practice and policy. The chapters fit and build on each other, offering cohesion rather than confusion about the state of the field. A unique contribution of this resource is the way the editors have placed the chapter authors in conversation with one another. Critical perspectives are brought to bear as counterpoints.

The range of chapters and the content covered depict the extensive territory of adult learning along with distinct theories, practices, and perspectives that are unique to adult learning. Adult learners are not portrayed as unidimensional but are instead represented as complex beings with diverse personal goals and perspectives. Adult educators are likewise described as multifaceted individuals with diverse motivations for teaching and serving their communities. Moreover, the contexts in which adult learners and educators co-construct learning become more layered as our world crosses multiple divides, problematizing issues such as access, opportunity, and program sustainability.

The 2020 version of the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* is of particularly high interest for scholars who are synthesizing historical trends in adult education and for those conducting literature reviews. The volume captures turns in the field that have led to where the field is currently. The text offers an extensive number of references for all subject matter subsumed under

the umbrella of adult and continuing education.

The handbook is reader-friendly, easy to navigate, and valuable for locating specific information on many adult education topics. Moreover, the chapters do not simply rehash previously published material, they offer unique perspectives on learning theories and practices that are relevant to today. Contemporary viewpoints point readers of this text toward designing instruction that is responsive for futures yet unknown.

Recommendations

The length and heft of this text may be intimidating at first; however, each chapter is written in an approachable tone that encourages personal connections and thoughtful prompts to guide readers' understanding and application of ideas. This reference book is useful for both novice and experienced scholars alike. While the packaging within such a lengthy volume might present a challenge for some readers, the content in this text is not intended exclusively for scholars or academics. The themes and opportunities for problematizing practice are approachable to and for practitioners.

The major themes and arguments in the resource cohere around central ideas and are well articulated. As the education field continues to change, the perspectives in this text can guide new innovations and reflections on social contexts such as equity and inclusion through the work of labor organizers and activists. The resources within the chapters resonate with perspectives of practitioners and program coordinators. They point to the need for continued examination through the collection of data to further inform both theory and practice.

The volume's informational writing style is inviting. As a reader digs into the material, the

text offers connections among and between the content that spark the desire to read onward. One may come to the resource for a specific purpose and continue reading to make connections across related issues and ideas.

Each of the chapter authors takes a unique stance and offers up-to-date information about multiple facets of adult learning. The content is well-organized and offers a range of perspectives, theories, and approaches. There are unique perspectives offered in the text that will engage any reader with an interest in adult learning. Through these perspectives, readers will make important connections to content detailed in different parts of the book.

Handbooks have their place in all fields and are often viewed as the definitive publication that represents the current state of knowledge. Often the publication of a handbook coincides with a

significant shift in thinking among theorists, practitioners, and policy makers. This resource coincides with the global pandemic during which education and the workforce turned to online and virtual means to accomplish their goals for large numbers of learners and workers. This shift came without warning or preparation, prompting the rethinking of many tried and true educational practices. This volume provides theories, research, and practices that ground our understanding of these unprecedented times and offers reflections on the changing nature of learning in the 21st century.

While it may not be practical for individuals to purchase this resource for their own use, libraries and other public repositories should invest in this resource for its value in both informing and transforming the field of adult and continuing education.