

EDITOR'S NOTES

Ask the average person the meaning of the term *adult educator*, and chances are that the person's definition will focus on the role of adult educator as a teacher—someone responsible for guiding the learning of adult learners. Those who have worked as adult educators or studied the literature of the field are likely to mention other roles and functions of the adult educator as well, such as developing and administering educational programs or educational and career counseling. Yet even for those experienced in the field and knowledgeable of its literature, the role of teacher is likely to remain front and center in describing the work of the adult educator. Hence, this issue was planned to focus on this critical adult educator role.

This issue reflects approaches and perspectives on teaching adults shared by authors who have published books related to adult teaching and learning during the past decade. One influential trend, that of highlighting the interconnections between teaching and learning, became apparent in the initial efforts to invite as chapter authors those who had theorized and published books specifically on teaching, with the idea that other books have focused more specifically on adult learning. It soon became apparent that this was to some degree an artificial separation, as demonstrated by several chapters ultimately selected for inclusion in this issue because of, rather than in spite of, their integrated treatments of teaching and learning. As terms like *learner-centered teaching* and *teaching for active learning* have become prominent in both higher and adult education practice and literature, so too has the realization that engaging in student-centered teaching requires both a keen understanding of adult learning and a willingness to simultaneously take on the role of learner.

This issue brings together the perspectives of nine experts on the teaching of adults who have published book-length works related to the subject. The chapters share a focus on understanding what constitutes effective teaching of adults rather than an emphasis on the techniques that constitute the teacher's toolkit. (Excellent sources on methods and strategies for adult training and teaching include Galbraith, 1990; Seaman and Fellenz, 1990; Davis and Davis, 1998; and Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler, 2000.) At the same time, the implications for teaching practice will be evident in each chapter.

The first two chapters provide an introduction to the issue and set out a framework for readers to reflect on the beliefs, values, and assumptions guiding their own teaching practice. The next five chapters separately examine dimensions of the teaching-learning transaction that have received particular attention during the past decade: teaching for transformation, teaching as a dialogic process, teaching as mentoring, race as a variable in

the teaching-learning transaction, and accommodating the learning needs of all. The final chapter synthesizes the themes and issues that these authors raise and integrates them into a broader context.

In Chapter One, Pratt cautions against a one-size-fits-all approach to the teaching of adults, whether it is the constructivist view of learning and teaching popular today or some other view of teaching and learning. Based on conclusions from ten years of research in five countries, documented more extensively in *Five Perspectives on Teaching in Adult and Higher Education* (Pratt and others, 1998), he delineates five distinct perspectives on teaching, each with the potential to inform good teaching: transmission, developmental (linked to the constructivist orientation), apprenticeship, nurturing, and social reform. Each represents a legitimate view of teaching that may serve as the core of good teaching when it is accompanied by reflection on the purposes guiding one's practices as a teacher.

Heimlich and Norland's discussion of teaching style in Chapter Two similarly reminds us that there is not a single approach to teaching adults. As they note, the "study of teaching style focuses on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of educators as they relate to the way the elements of the teaching learning exchange [teacher, learner, group, content, and environment] function." They maintain that congruence between the educator's philosophy and behavior in the teaching-learning exchange is the central element in understanding teaching style. (This chapter provides a condensed version of their work explored in their *Developing Teaching Style in Adult Education* [1994].)

In Chapter Three, Zachary explores the relationship between the role of mentor and the role of teacher, acknowledging that while good teaching practice informs good mentoring and vice versa, these roles are not synonymous and not all teachers either seek or serve adeptly in the role of mentor. She emphasizes the importance of relationship to mentoring and the centrality of effective facilitation skills to promoting effective learning within a mentoring relationship.

Zachary suggests that teachers should be prepared to navigate five phases of the mentoring relationship: (1) preparing oneself for the relationship, (2) preparing the relationship, (3) negotiating, (4) enabling, and (5) coming to closure. She suggests that even a relationship that does not end with successful completion of learning goals can benefit from having a good closure experience but that this requires planning for an exit strategy.

Johnson-Bailey in Chapter Four brings to an explicit level a dimension of the teaching-learning transaction that typically remains unacknowledged: race, of both learners and instructor. She challenges the notion of the adult education classroom as a neutral territory, unaffected by hierarchical power relations. She maintains that in American society race, an elusive socially defined construct, remains a potent marker used to categorize people and thus to allocate educational resource.

Johnson-Bailey identifies three major outlooks or stances with regard to race found in adult education literature—the color-blind, multicultural,

and social justice perspectives—and observes that until recently, the literature of the field has been dominated by the color-blind and multicultural perspectives. Presenting the social justice perspective as an alternative, she reviews recent literature that examines the ways in which privilege and positionality affect adult education curriculum, classroom practices, and interaction between teachers and learners and among learners.

Gadbow begins Chapter Five by presenting a set of six learners, each with special learning needs that require accommodations to facilitate their success, although not all would be considered disabled in traditional terms. Drawing on these learner scenarios, she advances the notion that the responsive teacher, facilitator, or mentor can recognize all learners' possibilities as well as needs. She acknowledges that many adults who bring special needs to the learning situation also have visible or invisible disabilities that present barriers to learning. Perhaps equally important to identifying ways of accommodating the barriers, she suggests, may be assisting learners in the development of self-advocacy skills. Focusing particularly on the context of higher education, she invites readers to imagine benefits to all learners if more flexible structures, allowing a range of options for program completion, were implemented. She suggests a number of ways in which educational programs can be made responsive to special learning needs, including responsive teaching, more flexible use of technologies in distance-learning programs, and use of assistive technologies. Readers will find useful her chart identifying resources for additional information on disabilities.

Many would agree that during the 1990s, transformative learning theory replaced andragogy as the dominant theory of adult learning. Cranton offers in Chapter Six a primer on transformative learning theory and discusses the special role of critical reflection in the transformative learning process. She delineates seven facets of the process, once thought of as steps: (1) an activating event, (2) articulating assumptions, (3) critical self-reflection, (4) being open to alternative viewpoints, (5) engaging in discourse, (6) redoing assumptions, and (7) acting, thinking, and talking in a way consistent with revised assumptions. Furthermore, she proposes teaching strategies for each of the seven facets.

In Chapter Seven, Vella explores the strong connections between teaching and learning. She opens the chapter with a definition of quantum learning and follows with an outline of the companion teaching approach, referred to as the dialogue approach (Vella, 1996). She acknowledges the paradox of using a highly structured teaching approach designed to invite spontaneity. Lest such an approach be interpreted as the latest method of training the trainers, readers are encouraged to read Vella's account of the conceptual roots of quantum learning with a legacy of diverse progenitors.

Finally, Chapter Eight identifies cross-cutting themes from the previous chapters.

Collectively, the chapters in this issue should stimulate readers to reflect on many aspects of the teaching-learning situation and the social context within which adult education programs are situated, along with

their personal histories and assumptions, values, and beliefs. Readers also will find strategies for aligning teaching practices with some of the core assumptions about adult teaching and learning prominent today.

References

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