

BOOK REVIEW

Richard G. Bagnall and Steven Hodge *Epistemologies and Ethics in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning* Palgrave Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, Springer Nature, Charn, Switzerland, 2022, 352 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-94980-8 (ebook)

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This book highlights the various epistemologies that underpin lifelong learning in modern society, and how each one is informed by a different understanding of what constitutes valuable knowledge. This helps to explain the tensions that often arise in the field of lifelong learning, as different epistemologies and their corresponding ethical conceptions can clash with one another. By recognising the normative nature of knowledge and its role in lifelong learning, the book provides a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of the field and navigating potential conflicts.

The monograph comprises 10 chapters, beginning with an introduction and concluding with a reflective postscript. There is no separate foreword or afterword included. The authors themselves contribute to all chapters, providing a cohesive exploration of various epistemological and ethical frameworks within adult education.

In the text, four epistemologies and ethical conceptions are identified as having influenced the lifelong learning movement to date. These four epistemologies and conceptions of ethics have played significant roles in shaping the lifelong learning movement. The disciplinary approach focuses on knowledge and skill acquisition within specific fields, while the developmental approach emphasises personal growth and self-actualisation. The emancipatory approach challenges power structures and seeks to empower individuals through education. Finally, the design approach, which currently dominates the field, is evolving to become more self-aware and reflective, focusing on ethical authenticity. Together,

these epistemologies and conceptions of ethics have contributed to the ongoing evolution of lifelong learning and its impact on society.

Some points that the book under review makes about lifelong learning include the idea that it is not limited to just adults but can also be fostered in childhood. Additionally, lifelong learning is not just about specific skills or knowledge; it is also about developing the ability and inclination to learn continuously throughout one's life.

While the book may be lengthy and complex at times, it offers valuable knowledge for readers at all levels of expertise in adult education and lifelong learning. Insights and perspectives on lifelong learning illuminate its importance and potential impact on individuals and society. The authors highlight the connection between lifelong learning and social justice, further emphasising the importance of continuous education for individuals and society. In this sense, the book is in some ways comparable to another book that I have also read recently on learning with adults, namely, *Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction* by Leona M. English and Peter Mayo (2012). Additionally, this book provides insightful definitions for key terms, such as 'ethics', which facilitate readers with delving deeper into the read.

In particular, Chapter 2 is enlightening because it presents information and perspectives concerning adult education and lifelong learning in modern times. These are particularly valuable for postgraduate students and researchers. They illuminate and support the discernment of new ideas and possibilities, especially of adult education and learning in informal and non-traditional settings. These include online courses, workshops, and self-directed learning.

Lifelong learning is essential in today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, as it allows individuals to continuously adapt and acquire new skills and knowledge throughout their lives. This is especially relevant in times when technology and globalisation have created a need for individuals to constantly learn, adapt, and to stay relevant.

Another interesting chapter is Chapter 4, where the authors delve into the topic of disciplinary epistemology and ethics in lifelong learning. They explore how different disciplines have their own ways of knowing and understanding the world, and how these ways of knowing can influence our ethical beliefs and actions. Additionally, the chapter emphasises the importance of understanding disciplinary perspectives for facilitating effective teaching and learning in an ever-changing and diverse global

community. By recognising and respecting different disciplinary epistemologies and ethics, we can foster a culture of lifelong learning and promote critical thinking and understanding among students.

This chapter also refers also to the ways of knowing and understanding within a specific field of study or discipline. In lifelong learning, this can be seen through the emphasis on critical thinking and analysis, as well as the use of evidence and research to inform learning. For example, in a biology class, students may learn about scientific methods and how to evaluate and interpret data. Ethics in lifelong learning, on the other hand, involve understanding and adhering to moral principles and values in the pursuit of knowledge and personal development. This can be demonstrated through the inclusion of ethical discussions and considerations in course material, as well as the promotion of ethical behaviour and decision-making in the classroom. For instance, a philosophy class may explore ethical theories and their application to real-world situations.

After reading Chapter 8, "An Emergent Reflexive Epistemology in Lifelong Learning," I was forced to question my understanding of cultural context and how it shapes our beliefs and actions. The Chapter challenged me to think critically about the impact of cultural influences on our learning and development, and how we can use this knowledge to promote lifelong learning in a diverse and ever-changing world. It also made me question the role of education in perpetuating or challenging cultural norms and how we can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Overall, this chapter was a thought-provoking and eye-opening read that has changed my perspective on the importance of understanding cultural context in lifelong learning. Subsequently reading this chapter, I found myself asking questions such as: How does culture influence our ways of knowing and learning? How can we incorporate diverse perspectives and epistemologies into education? How can we create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all individuals? This chapter opened my eyes to the complexity and richness of cultural context in the realm of lifelong learning.

This book made me appreciate even more the vastness of lifelong learning and the importance of continuously seeking knowledge and growth. It also highlighted the crucial role of adults in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for others. Ultimately, we have agency in shaping our ideas and perceptions about learning and education.

Reference

English, L. M., & Mayo, P. (2012). *Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.