

BOOK REVIEW

**Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan, Helen Bound and Rebekah Lim
Wei Ying (Eds.) *Pedagogies for future-oriented adult
learners: Flipping the Lens from teaching to learning*
Springer Nature, Charn, Switzerland, 2022, 174 pp. ISBN
978-3-030-92869-8 (pbk)**

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In view of the growing demand for a change in adult education at community, vocational and higher education level, and the need to put learners and learning at the centre of our pedagogical practices, away from the traditional transmission and acquisition approaches (Sfard, 1998), the book, *Pedagogies for Future-Oriented Adult Learners*, is truly a valuable contribution in the field of adult education. The editors of the book, Helen Bound, Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan and Rebekah Lim Wei Ying, all having a vast experience in Adult Education, argue for a re-orientation in the pedagogy of adult education to emphasize aspirations, circumstances, and needs of twenty-first century learners. This book, which is the 27th volume of the Lifelong Learning Book Series, is groundbreaking in the way it connects the already much debated theories of learning to the “realities of everyday messiness of working, living and learning”. (p. 5). It challenges the traditional pedagogies of learning and teaching and advocates for innovative practices such as blended learning and incorporating learners’ prior experiences to nurture future-oriented learners.

The book consists of three structured main parts, with a total of ten chapters, empirical and conceptual in their nature, written by different authors. The fundamental ideas which are presented in the first part progress to practical applications throughout the book. Part one entitled,

“Introducing the Focus on Learners”, through the first two chapters, outlines the central ideas in this book. Helen Bound who is also one of the editors, introduces the main idea of the book, that is putting the learners and the learning at the centre, as the subtitle of the book suggests, Flipping the lens from teaching to learning. She presents the readers with several metaphors to provide insights into what is involved in theoretically flipping the lens, to enable the educators and others connected with learning, to move beyond the traditional grand theories of learning-behaviourism, cognition, and constructivism. Her first chapter serves as a preamble to the rest of the book.

The three editors co-author the second chapter of the book that describes very clearly the three major constructs that are pivotal to all the following chapters. The key constructs: future orientation, identity, and contexts and practices, are brought to life through stories taken from different real-life contexts, in view of the theoretical metaphors used in the previous chapter. Through a dialogical inquiry approach, which is comprehensively discussed by Helen Bound and Seng Chee Tan in the next part of the book, “David” a human resource manager reading for a part-time Masters degree, was “able to develop new epistemic practices shifting from human capital formulations to a holistic value of people in their contexts and valuing their biographies and life experiences” (Bound et al, 2022, p. 22).

The second part of the book, “Framing the Issues” provides various frameworks for rethinking learning. The authors present new conceptualisations of learning, to change learning for acquisition to emancipatory learning. It is interesting how Anne Edwards in Chapter 3 defines the social situation of learning using the Vygotskian cultural-historical approach to learning, which she deems as a future-oriented approach to meet the demands of the present workplaces. She asserts that flipping the lens to focus on the learner “requires careful analysis of the practices in which they might learn; how they respond to the demands in practices and how the learners might be helped with interpretations and responses” (p. 38), while seeing that the learner’s agency is exercised alongside this process. In Chapter 4 Roger Säljö repositions learning, not as behaviour and cognition taking place in individual minds, but as emergent through activity in collaboration with

‘symbolic technologies’. The story presented in the introductory part explains very well how the maths curricular experience of Alice, together with the technological expertise of Cassie, changed the initial rote learning experience into a much more significant one through symbolic technologies.

The current policy and educational institutions focusing mainly on employability tend to limit the working people’s participation and democratic struggle over processes of learning. In view of this, in Chapter 5 Henning Salling Olesen proposes “an idea of competence building which is based on life experience” (p. 80) as an alternative to create a lifelong learning approach which is not just limited to employability and competitiveness but extends beyond. In the last chapter of the second part “Future of Work, Transitions and Future-Oriented Learning” Arthur Chia, inspired by Zygmunt Bauman, proposes future-oriented learning as a means to enhance workers ownership and control of their work, labour, and skills. He refers to the six principles of learning design (Bound & Chia, 2019) to highlight the role of the teacher as shifting between the expert and source of knowledge to a facilitator or critical questioner according to the needs of the learner, that is, flipping the lens from teaching to learning.

“Flipping the Lens in Practice”, the last part of the book, shares specific approaches for enabling flipping the lens to bring focus in different contexts to learners and learning. In Chapter 7 Christine Owen uses her experience with the High-3 workplace culture structures together with a framework model of learning based on Kolb’s experiential learning theory, to facilitate learning in the workplace, foreseeing that “the future organisations that are the most productive will be those who understand the value of learning from events that happen in the workplace” (p. 117). In Chapter 8 Rebekah Lim Wei Ying, the third editor of this book, through her considerations for the Singapore Work-Study Programme, presents: the learner’s view; how the learner is being influenced by the social others in the process of being and becoming; and the learner’s reflection of their own development, as the three main perspectives in the trajectory of the learner from “novice to expert” (p. 126).

The authors of this book tend to draw examples and case studies from research, at times their own research, while presenting and discussing their arguments, aiming to extract valuable insights. In the last chapter, Bi Xiaofang talks about how students experience different sense making features in two different blended learning courses and how this affects them; “learners tend to experience seamless sense-making when they are offered more opportunities to share ideas, gain different perspectives from others and are exposed to different authentic workplace settings” (p. 170). Through the excerpts retrieved from the case studies of the stories in this chapter and in the previous ones, the readers are provided with illustrations that vividly depict the ideas discussed by the authors in the book. Most of the times, these are embedded within the Singaporean context. Perhaps examples from studies from other countries could have provided a broader global perspective. Also, in view of the artificial intelligence era which we are currently going through, I feel that there could have been more examples on how new technologies can enhance future oriented learning.

Pedagogies for future-oriented learners discusses learning in an innovative way. It should provide a true inspiration for scholars, researchers, learners, and educators who believe in the necessity for a change in the pedagogies for a more future-oriented Adult Education. It is an Adult Education that will also “allude to the importance of society addressing issues of inclusiveness and equity, and for enabling individual’s ability to thrive in uncertain and changing circumstances” (Bound, 2022, p.

References

- Bound, H., & Chia, A. (2019). *The six principles of learning design: Designing learning for performance*. Singapore: Institute for Adult Learning.
- Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4-13.