

A-Z of Health Promotion: Book Review

James Woodall

Centre for Health Promotion Research, Leeds Metropolitan University

Abstract

With its accessibility, format and comprehensive coverage of key concepts, the A-Z of Health Promotion by Glenn Laverack makes a unique contribution to the market. Outlining 72 key concepts and 140 other terms, the book is highly recommended for those new to, or already practicing, health promotion as well as students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Moreover, the international ‘flavour’ of case studies and examples means that it has relevance for a global audience. The book’s format allows for easy navigation and for readers to move from concept-to-concept in an order that best suits their needs. Given the authors’ considerable expertise, it is unsurprising that the entries have an empowerment theme with less focus on disease or lifestyle/behavioural approaches in health promotion programmes. In summary, the book makes a refreshing contribution and is an invaluable sourcebook that effectively captures and presents complex ideas in health promotion.

© 2013 Californian Journal of Health Promotion. All rights reserved.

The A-Z of Health Promotion will undoubtedly have wide-ranging appeal due to its accessibility, format and comprehensive coverage of key concepts within health promotion. Starting with ‘advocacy’ and ending with ‘zero and non-zero sum’ power, the book outlines 72 key concepts and 140 other terms each with guidance for further reading. The book is, however, more than simply a glossary of key terms (Nutbeam, 1998; Smith, Tang, & Nutbeam, 2006). Indeed, the book uses many global case study examples to show how key health promotion concepts apply in practice; this is a particular strength of the book which makes it relevant for an international market.

There are some very specific entries in the book, such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘health activism’ that demonstrate the author’s considerable experience and in-depth understanding of issues central to health promotion theory and practice. Entries in the book capture complex ideas that have been synthesised and presented clearly and effectively in a reader friendly format for students and practitioners of health promotion. Specific entries also sit comfortably alongside broader ones such as ‘theory and models’ and ‘evidence-based practice’. The entries usefully

explain the key debates and/or summarising historical trends whilst others have a practical purpose, for example, the entry ‘photo-voice’ offers a useful overview of the methodology as a step-by-step process of its application.

The book is easy to navigate which makes it very accessible and the detailed index allows the reader to pin-point key terms quickly. Unlike many texts, the book does not have to be read in any particular sequence or order, rather readers are likely to move from concept-to-concept in an order that best suits their needs. The book is essential for those new to, or already practicing, health promotion. It would support practitioners either in updating or refreshing their existing knowledge or in introducing new and cutting edge ideas in health promotion. Moreover as a Course Leader in Public Health – Health Promotion, students are often asking me to recommend books and suitable reading. From experience, students want books that have longevity and something that can be used for the duration of their course and beyond. In my opinion, this text will be an invaluable sourcebook for those studying health promotion. From a personal perspective, the book has many useful entries that will be constantly referred to

in teaching and will become a definitive dictionary of key concepts in the theory and practice of health promotion.

This book is written by a leading international expert in community based health promotion and consequently does not focus on approaches that are heavily dependent on information transfer, motivational or behaviour change theory. For more comprehensive perspectives on these areas, readers should look elsewhere (see for example, Cross, O'Neil, & Dixey, 2013; Green & Tones, 2010). The entries have an

empowerment theme rather than a more traditional focus on the different aspects of a lifestyle/behavioural approach in health promotion programmes. The book could be further extended by providing more detail, for example, in regard to the bio-medical approach including key entries of a disease based nature. That said, the book takes a new and refreshing approach to the theory and practice of health promotion and its pocket-size format makes it an ideal text that will undoubtedly become 'well-thumbed' by those who purchase it.

References

- Cross, R., O'Neil, I., & Dixey, R. (2013). Communicating health. In R. Dixey (Ed.), *Health promotion: global principles and practice*. London: CABI.
- Green, J., & Tones, K. (2010). *Health promotion. Planning and strategies*. London: Sage.
- Nutbeam, D. (1998). Health promotion glossary. *Health Promotion International*, 13(4), 349-364.
- Smith, B. J., Tang, K. C., & Nutbeam, D. (2006). WHO health promotion glossary: new terms. *Health Promotion International*, 21(4), 340-345.

Author Information

Dr James Woodall

Co-Director of the Centre for Health Promotion Research
& Course Leader MSc Public Health – Health Promotion
Leeds Metropolitan University