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Reviewer: Robin Simmons, School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

This book is part of the Critical Pedagogy Today series, which aims to build on and reinvigorate the work of Paulo Freire. John Smyth’s *Critical Pedagogy for Social Justice* offers an accessible exposition of critical pedagogy, and an interpretation of radical education which is both fitting and relevant for contemporary times. Whilst the book is not intended to be a guide or a toolkit for practice, it will certainly engage and challenge those working with the marginalised and the excluded. It deserves to be read by teachers, youth workers, advice and guidance practitioners and others working in disadvantaged communities – as well as by academics and policymakers.

This book comprises five chapters, the first of which introduces the Freirian concept of critical hope. This provides the backdrop for the twin themes pursued throughout the text: a critique of educational and social injustice, and the development of more socially-just alternatives. In Chapter 1, Smyth explains how critical hope is profoundly different from neo-liberal notions of personal ambition based upon individualistic acquisition. At least since the 1970s, neo-liberal discourses have labelled the poor as hopeless; in contrast, Smyth argues for the return of hope, although, as he explains, this needs to be a serious, politically-informed critical hope.

Chapter 2 raises important questions about teaching. The chapter’s first theme is a critique of the ‘management pedagogies’ which are a particular manifestation of neo-liberalism, and which Smyth argues has led to the immiseration of teaching. The second theme is a ‘critical re-imagination of teaching’, which outlines a range of ways in which critical pedagogy can be introduced at the ‘chalk-face’ – ways in which inequality and injustice can be critiqued, and democratic alternatives promoted. Drawing on a range of thinkers, including Gramsci, Kohl and Giroux, Smyth argues that the compliant, uncritical teacher needs to be replaced by the intellectual, politically-active teacher who asks searching questions about knowledge: about why certain forms of knowledge are legitimised and selected, and others are omitted; and about whose world-view is privileged and whose are denied. Smyth reminds us that teachers should be intellectuals and critical thinkers, not technicians.

Chapter 3 focuses on students and how they are affected by the ways in which education is organised and operated. Smyth argues that traditional forms of subject and teacher-centred pedagogy often reinforce and exacerbate disadvantage, but he also recognises that simplistic attempts to be more democratic and supportive can create fear and insecurity amongst students. It is argued that the key to empowering students lies in building ‘relational trust’ within and across a range of groups. This, Smyth argues, is a more effective way to include the disadvantaged and the excluded than the current preoccupation with structural and organisational change. Central to Smyth’s approach is a desire to empower young people as active participants in education. This is not a straightforward task, especially when working with the most marginalised – and Smyth recognises this. However, the case of ‘Mango High School’, an institution with extraordinarily difficult circumstances, is used to illustrate what can be achieved when relations are prioritised. This discussion is worth reading carefully as it provides valuable insights into the forms of pedagogy, organisation and leadership necessary to create relational trust.
Chapter 4 deals with community engagement and begins by reminding us that, whilst various forms of disadvantage are concentrated in certain communities, it is not a natural phenomenon. Quite rightly Smyth points out that disadvantage is a constructed state, related to systematic inequality and injustice. Flowing from this, he argues that community regeneration programmes, which assume that disadvantage is rooted in the shortcomings of certain individuals and groups, are inherently flawed. Smyth argues there needs to be an emphasis on the capabilities which individuals and communities possess rather than their perceived deficits. Facilitating such a programme of work, as Smyth acknowledges, requires, amongst other qualities, passion, persistence and courage. However, at its heart should be a debate about inequality, how it is constructed and maintained, and how to challenge it.

Chapter 5, *Continuing the Struggle*, uses Joe Kincheloe’s concept of ‘evolving criticality’ as its touchstone. It is argued that, above all, an inclusive ‘co-generative dialogue’, which not only confronts injustice but offers alternatives, possibilities and hope, should be at the heart of critical pedagogy. This is perhaps the most powerful lesson to be learned from this book – strenuous opposition to neo-liberalism’s corrosive ‘reform’ agenda is necessary, but so too are alternative narratives of hope, empowerment and social justice.

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Available now from Open University Press

Ian Rushton and Martin Suter

Reflective Practice for Teaching in Lifelong Learning

"The authors of this clear and informative book have delved into their extensive experience to produce a must-have text for all those who care about the state of teaching and learning in the Lifelong Learning sector. By providing an in-depth, detailed and critical accounts of the key processes and products of reflective practice, their book must become a set text on initial teacher training courses for the sector and an essential resource for both tutors and managers."

Dr Graham Hitchcock, University Centre, Doncaster, UK.

Reflective practice is an important skill for students learning to teach in the lifelong learning sector. This book makes the case for reflective practice in post compulsory teaching and shows how it can be used to support teachers in coping with the complexities and contingencies of practice.

The book introduces a basic model of reflective practice and then explores several further models relevant to teaching in the lifelong learning sector, offering guidance on the application of each model in practice.

Collaborative approaches to reflective practice are also discussed, and the place of reflective practice in teachers continuing professional development is carefully examined. Other key features of the book include:

- Clear links with the professional standards for teachers in the lifelong learning sector
- Discussion of the challenges and issues when engaging in reflection on practice
- Coverage of action research, often considered an extension of reflective practice
- Illustrations drawn from the authors' extensive experience in teaching and enabling learning

Reflective Practice for Teaching in Lifelong Learning has been written to address the needs of student teachers across a whole range of lifelong learning courses.

ISBN: 9780335244010

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COMING SOON FROM
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Creative Teaching Approaches in the Lifelong Learning Sector
Brendon Harvey and Josie Harvey
University of Bradford, UK; University of Huddersfield, UK

Teaching and learning in the lifelong learning sector must embrace creativity in order to meet the varied needs of its learners. This practical book explores creative ways of teaching and learning in the lifelong learning sector and provides a toolkit of creative teaching approaches with the potential to transform your teaching practice.

Drawing on various techniques and diverse environments the book illustrates a variety of approaches, offering insights and conclusions drawn from a rich range of practice examples and highlighting the potential pitfalls of creative practices.

Organized into three main sections - The Individual; The Group Perspective; and The Organizational Context - the book tackles crucial issues such as:

- The characteristics of a creative tutor
- Boosting your creative confidence, and that of your learners
- Creative methods to excite and engage learners
- Constructing a creative session
- Developing resilience and self-care strategies

Throughout the book there are activities, reflection points and extension tasks, as well as the frequent use of symbols and cross-referencing notes to help you see the links between sections.

Creative Teaching Approaches in the Lifelong Learning Sector will appeal to trainee and experienced teachers working in the lifelong learning sector, including further and higher education, work-based learning, and adult and community settings.

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