

Book Review



Hungarian Educational Research  
Journal

**Bowl, M. (2017). Adult education in neoliberal times: Policies, philosophies and professionalism. Basingstoke, UK, Palgrave Macmillan**

2019, Vol. 9(2) 360–363

© The Author(s) 2019

<https://akademiai.com/loi/063>

Akadémiai Kiadó

DOI:10.1556/063.9.2019.1.32

*Reviewed by Sanaa Taler Saleh<sup>1</sup>*

Dr. Bowl is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education. Her areas of research and teaching expertise include post-compulsory education, adult and informal education, widening participation in further and higher education, and education in the context of globalization and internationalization. In the School of Education, she is the leader of the Department of Internationalization in the Department of Education and Social Justice.

The book consisted of two parts, which was first published by NIECE in 2014. The demise of NIECE in 2015 meant that the book quickly ceased to be available; therefore, the author revised and republished the book at Palgrave at 2017. The book is a historical and a political context for adult education, with particular references of England and New Zealand.

The aim of the author in this book is to move the discussion forward in two ways:

1. Opening to some of the advocacy and campaigning strategies, which could be more widely employed in defense of adult education for the public good.
2. By articulating a more politically engaged and theoretically informed approach to adult education.

The author's purpose in this book is to analyze the realities of adult educators working lives against the background of the current global political and economic climate in England and

---

<sup>1</sup> Doctoral Program on Educational and Cultural Sciences, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary, Email address: [sanasalh29@gmail.com](mailto:sanasalh29@gmail.com)

---

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes, provided the original author and source are credited, a link to the CC License is provided, and changes – if any – are indicated.

---

New Zealand. The author is also discussing the challenges faced by adult educators as a result of the application of neoliberal ideologies to their field of practice. The author also tried to move beyond a critique consequence of neoliberalism and discussion of the factions of avoidance, accommodation, and micro resistance, which have become standard responses to economically focused and instrumental forms of adult education.

The author opens the conversation in the book by two questions that frustrated adult educators.

1. Why and when has lifelong learning become a policy priority for the past 40 years? Do publicly funded adults appear to be fighting for its life?
2. Why doesn't recognize the very height educated and experienced adult educational landscape the value of the contribution?

The logic of neoliberalism is underpinned by a conviction that economic relation and discipline of the market are paramount and that state should take a minimal role in the social realm. It is argued this will produce benefits for the national economy and develop human capital, which in turn will fuel economic competitiveness.

In the first part of the book, the author explained the impact of neoliberalism in adult education by the influence of consumerism and instrumentalism in education; many other factors that influence adult education, such as policy of technology, political and economic environment, global shifts, history, culture, and socioeconomic circumstance and the factors that caused the capture of adult education in England and New Zealand. New Zealand's adult education and community education largely reflects the colonial past of England to New Zealand. It also reflects the military, political, economic, and ideological struggles of and between Maori and Pakaha.

The book also reviews some issues in adult education practice that will be reflected throughout the nature and scope of adult educators' work, the value, and philosophies, which said of adult education as a field of practice in England and New Zealand. The focus of the research of this book is lifelong learning at a global level with the particular role of UNESCO and other international organization.

The book offers an account of changing adult education policy and practice at the national level in England and New Zealand. It illustrates the strength of the influence of the global trends and ideologies in both countries, which have resulted in a degree of policy convergence.

The book is providing evidence of contradiction, continuing casualization, and increasing regulation of adult educators work and its incorporation into a neoliberal turn, focusing the educational regime economically. The book also mentioned the influence of radical

political and educational ideas stimulating popular education movements. They are also influenced by publicly funded adult educators, who were employed in the developing field of adult and community education.

At the second part of the book, the author described her research on 62 adult educators from England and New Zealand working in a diverse setting in England and New Zealand by collecting data from interviewees. Then, the author described the careers of adult educators through the narratives of six interviewees who were in different stages in their working. Three of them live in England and three of them in New Zealand.

The results from the author's research appear predominantly; adult educators' beliefs and values were expressed in liberal/humanist terms concerning the direction of their efforts toward promoting equality of opportunity and compensating for past educational disadvantage. In New Zealand, based on the practitioners, a community- and society-oriented perspective was more evident than in England where a compensatory discourse seems to have a strong hold. The interviewees also suggested a dominant orientation toward values of equality of opportunity and social justice. By these suggestions, those adult educators in England and New Zealand managed the contradictions between their beliefs about adult education and the expectations placed upon them by the policy.

The book also takes the discussion beyond the dilemmas of the workplace and evaluates some of the strategic responses of practitioners' organizations to the policy climate.

At the end of the book, the author mentioned some lessons for the neoliberal time, hoping that this gives adult educators some autonomy to develop approaches to their work and influencing tacitly or explicitly by range of adult education philosophies and theories.

The book is a historical source of education in both New Zealand and Britain from 1970 until the present time. The book is important in adult education as it is a result of the author's long experience in education between the two countries. Highly motivational and recommended researchers can be relied upon it by making specialized research in adult education while it contains investigations conducted by the author and can be used as a previous study in this field.

By the conclusion of the book, adult educators can still find space to work against the gain of policy. However, their fate is inextricably linked with the global political economy. The fact needs to be explicitly and critically acknowledged as a force for advancing critical dialogue, democracy, and social justice and making common cause with other defending's

work in the public sphere, within and outside their immediate context of work. The level of learning and clear qualifications among this group of adult educators gives a line for their characterization in both England and New Zealand, as workers in need of professional development are also in need of opportunities for studying the theory and practice of adult education at high levels of experience.