ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY

A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND THEORY IN ADULT EDUCATION

EDITORS
Sharan B. Merriam
Ronald M. Cervero
University of Georgia

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
B. Allan Quigley
Pennsylvania State University

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE
Edward W. Taylor
University of Georgia

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Lee Burket
Brad Cahoon
Shary L. Karlin
Vivian Wilson Mott
Barbara A. Schell
University of Georgia

Adult Education Quarterly is published in January, April, July, and October by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, 1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036. Copyright 1984 by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. All rights reserved. To obtain permission for article duplication, contact the author whose address is at the bottom of the first page of each article.

Adult Education Quarterly is a refereed journal committed to the dissemination of research and theory in adult and continuing education. The editors seek manuscripts that report research, build theory, interpret and review literature, or critique articles previously published in AEQ. Manuscripts primarily concerned with the techniques of practice are generally not within the scope of this journal.

Maximum length for most manuscripts is 5000 words. Four copies should be submitted. The title page should contain: (a) the title of the manuscript; (b) full names, institutional affiliations, and positions of the authors; (c) acknowledgements of formal contributions to the work by others, if any; and (d) statement of place and date of previous oral presentation of the paper, if any. The first page of text should repeat the title of the article and include an abstract of no more than 150 words. The name(s) of the author(s) should not appear on this or any subsequent page of text. For rules governing references and style, consult the *Publication Manual* (Third Edition) of the American Psychological Association.

Manuscripts that do not conform to these standards will be returned for revision. The editors strongly suggest that authors refer to the Editorial Policy published in Volume 42, Number 1 of *Adult Education Quarterly*. Reprints of these guidelines are available upon request. Send all submissions and editorial correspondence to the editors at the following address:

Adult Education Quarterly
Department of Adult Education
422 Tucker Hall
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
Tel: 706-542-2214
Bitnet: AEQ@UGA

Book reviews are handled by the Book Review Editor, B. Allan Quigley. Inquiries can be sent to him at the Regional Continuing Graduate Education Center, Pennsylvania State University, 4518 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146. Essay Reviews are commissioned by the AEQ editors who welcome suggestions for topics and authors.

ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY

CONTENTS

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 1, Fall, 1993
ISSN 0741-7136

ARTICLES

The Common Concern: Controlling the Professionalization of Adult Education
Arthur L. Wilson . . . 1

"Happy Consciousness": Ideology and Hidden Curricula in Literacy Education
B. Allan Quigley & Ella Holsinger . . . 17

Perspective Transformation and Adult Development
Mark C. Tennant . . . 34

FORUM

The Democratization of Knowledge
The Group for Collaborative Inquiry . . . 43

BOOK REVIEWS

Hemphill: Gowen, S. G. (1992). *The Politics of Workplace Literacy: A Case Study* . . . 52

Jurmo: Mace, J. (1992). *Talking about Literacy: Principles and Practice of Adult Literacy Education* . . . 54

Tisdell: Miller, N. (1989). *Personal Experience, Adult Learning and Social Research: Developing a Sociological Imagination In and Beyond the T-Group* . . . 57

Adult Education Quarterly (ISSN 0741-7136) is published four times annually by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, 1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036. Subscriptions $36 per year, U.S., $43 Canada and Foreign; AAACE members receive the *Adult Education Quarterly* at the annual subscription rate of $20 as part of their membership dues. Individual copies $12. Second-class postage paid at Arlington, VA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036.

Mace, Jane. (1992) *Talking about Literacy: Principles and Practice of Adult Literacy Education*. New York: Routledge. 168 pages. US prices: cloth $59.95, paper $16.95.

For Jane Mace, this book is a kind of "autobiography" drawn from twenty years as a literacy practitioner in Britain. She has concluded that literacy education is much more complex and fascinating than the rhetoric of literacy campaigns and funding guidelines would suggest: "The question I set out to discuss in this book is: what other ways are open to us of talking about literacy than as a substitute to 'the problem of illiteracy'?" (p. xv). She succeeds by challenging us to see literacy in terms of collective "inquiry," learner-defined "interests" vs. externally-ascribed "needs," "community," and other principles learned through practice.

Literacy education, she says, should not merely be a process of creating passive readers of someone else's writing. Rather, the learner should be seen as a researcher, working with others in a spirit of inquiry to analyze questions, themes, and texts. Learners thereby "create new knowledge from their existing experience" (p. 74) which in turn can be communicated to and refined with others.

Learners can practice this active "researcher" role, says Mace, by conducting interviews, writing "group poetry," editing each others' texts, maintaining portfolios, exploring conflicts, analyzing workplace problems, and keeping diaries. Learners thereby "are not merely consumers but creators of course curriculum" (p. 64). In such a process, the teacher acquires a new identity. Mace quotes a fellow practitioner: "My job is not to 'teach her to write.' Instead our job together is to allow her to find out what it is she needs to say and how to say it" (p. xviii). This approach "implies a syllabus . . . sketched in outline before the course, and only fully written when the course is over – for it implies that the participants themselves make the curriculum (p. 59). "Correcting mistakes is a small part of literacy education. The other work is its central business" (p. 93).

Mace argues that, traditionally, literacy education has focused primarily on "needs" defined by "others." Those externally-ascribed needs, however, too often do not match learners' actual interests. Although perhaps well-intended, the result is literacy efforts in which the learner has only limited real interest. According to Mace, learners often come to recognize a need for literacy education only when there is a change in a support system which has until then allowed them to avoid seeing literacy as a need. To understand learners' interests, we need to listen to their "authentic voices, speaking from their own experience, on their own terms" (p. 19).

Mace sees "community" as providing the audience and peer-support a new writer-researcher needs. In our current culture, which tends to "advocate individual goals at all costs" (p. 119), it is natural to long for a sense of community. But she cautions against relying on a mythical vision of "community" as "a golden age in the past, long gone" (p. 119), when "everyone lived together and knew each other and had always lived in the same place" (p. 125). We can also fall prey to a second illusion, of a "brutal world of reality, [where] nobody cares . . . nobody knows anyone else . . . everyone comes from somewhere else" (p. 125). She argues that overreliance on these myths "is sad, because it often expresses an individual's sense of loss for some time in the past when they felt known and recognised; and because it denies the possibility of difference being exciting. It is also dangerous, precisely because it is hostile to difference" (pp.125-6).

For those seeking to build a sense of "community" into literacy education, "a community is not born, it is made" (p. 120). Even a workplace can be a community if we see it "not merely as a series of ladders to be climbed . . . or individual career paths in a competitive context . . . but as a place of communication . . . around common as well as individual interests" (p. 121).

Mace has seen a trend in Britain since the mid-1970s to adopt this new perspective, which has come with a shift from one-to-one tutoring to collaborative groups using the kinds of practices described above (p. 8). However, this trend has met some obstacles. Funders and higher-level policy makers still promote "giving them tests, adding up scores, and fixing the figures" (p. 16) and requiring education to "justify itself in terms of financial return" (p. 44). Mace quotes one funder: "I'm not asking for stories: I want to know the outcomes – how many of your students became literate?" (p. 15). Rather than see learners' statements as evidence of growth in self-efficacy and learning, such a funder is

operating on "sociological and historical research (which qualifies) the firsthand testimony of individuals as 'subjective' and only partial truth" (p. 25).

She sees funders and policy makers as having a limited understanding of what literacy – and effective literacy education – is. They have created a false dichotomy between "creative" and "functional" literacy. She feels that what are normally considered "functional" uses of literacy (e.g., report-writing) can best be learned through a "creative" process" which "enables students to relive and retell the situations and contexts in which the reading and writing take place" (pp. 80-81). She says that these decision-makers also have a one-dimensional view of who a learner is, assuming that effective instruction can focus on only one element of a person's life at a time. Rather than recognize that learners' experience is complex, drawn from the multiple overlapping contexts in which they live, policy-makers try to break instruction down into artificial bits and thereby fail to build on learners' actual knowledge, interests, and learning opportunities.

It is not clear to what Mace would attribute these kinds of resistance to new ways of talking about literacy. It might be due to a lack of experience and a lack of knowledge among higher-level decision-makers. But it could also be due to a fear that such education could lead to what Mace describes as a "new defiance" and a "change in attitude" among learners (p. 62). "Such a change in attitude is a political change, for it will certainly pose a challenge to other people's attitudes, too" (p. 63). It would also imply "some change in the usual balance of power: namely, from a position in which some people communicate and the rest have to read or listen to what they say, to one in which all may have reason to make communication, as well as receive it" (pp. 121-22).

This book is valuable for any North American interested in learning more about literacy in the U.K. It presents a British practitioner's analysis from a perspective which, on this side of the Atlantic, might be called "participatory," "community-oriented," and/or "learner-centered." Those here who hold such a perspective will likely find the book thought-provoking, informative, and "affirming." Those not holding such a perspective could also learn from Mace's experience, if they approach it with an open mind.

I only wish that Mace had provided more evidence of the practice and theoretical influences which have shaped her thinking. She periodically describes a particular instructional activity or mentions a familiar name like psycholinguist Frank Smith or Paulo Freire, but she does not sufficiently explain how they influenced her. I nonetheless recommend this as a thoughtful guide for those looking for new ways to talk about literacy education.

Paul Jurmo
Literacy Partnerships
Jersey City, New Jersey