



Learning Transfer in Adult Education (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Number 137)

Kaiser, Leann M. R.; Kaminski, Karen; and Foley, Jeffrey M., eds.
Wiley, 2013

Book Review

Tags: adult education | adult learning | experiential learning | learning transfer

Reviewed by: Rhiannon Graybill, *Rhodes College*

Date Reviewed: May 15, 2015

Leann M. R. Kaiser, Karen Kaminski, and Jeffrey M. Foley's edited volume *Learning Transfer in Adult Education* offers a concise and readable entry point into the topic of learning transfer. While the stated focus of the volume is adult education, many of the themes and strategies considered will be of interest to those teaching traditional undergraduates as well. According to the editors, "Learning transfer, simply stated, is the ability of a learner to apply skills and knowledge learned in one situation or setting to another" (1). This goal, they suggest, is fundamental to any educational enterprise.

In the first chapter, Foley and Kaiser introduce learning transfer and concepts associated with it, providing a useful framing for the chapters that follow. In particular, Foley and Kaiser explain the distinction between "near transfer," in which the new situation closely resembles the original learning context, and "far transfer," in which it does not. These and a handful of other key terms reappear throughout the essays; this chapter deserves a careful reading. The chapter also offers a brief overview of some tools available to instructors, many of which reappear or are discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

Chapters 2 through 7 offer a variety of perspectives. Nate Furman and Jim Sibthorp (chapter 2) consider experiential learning techniques. These include problem-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, service learning, and reflective learning. Three strong case studies are offered in this chapter, which help demonstrate the techniques in action. One of the techniques, problem-based learning (PBL), is the focus of the contribution by Woei Hung (chapter 3). Hung introduces the distinction between "well-structured" and "ill-structured"

problems; the latter are more commonly found in the workplace and thus are productively used in PBL. Hung also comments on the cognitive processes that underlie effective learning transfer; these are complemented nicely by Jacqueline McGinty, Jean Radin, and Karen Kaminski's study of "Brain-Friendly Teaching" (chapter 5). As the phrase "brain-friendly" suggests, the chapter skews toward pop psychology, but many of the techniques seem to hold potential. Patricia L. Hardré's contribution (chapter 4), meanwhile, offers a serious engagement with the question of authenticity as it plays out in technology design.

The remaining two case studies take up broader concerns. Rosemary Closson (chapter 6) offers a nuanced review of issues surrounding race and cultural difference in learning transfer, combining theoretical and practical discussion. This chapter is especially valuable for instructors interested in race, cultural difference, and pedagogy. Jeani C. Young (chapter 7) offers an equally sensitive treatment of personal change. The volume concludes with a discussion by the editors on "applying transfer in practice."

While those teaching adult learners will especially benefit from the specific examples and case studies, all interested readers stand to profit from this volume. In particular, its wealth of practical examples and classroom strategies offer quick and immediate value to the busy reader.

https://wabash.center/resources/book_reviews/learning-transfer-in-adult-education-new-directions-for-adult-and-continuing-education-number-137/