



## Reviews / Comptes rendus

# Political Sociology of Adult Education

By Carlos Alberto Torres

(Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2013, 118 pages)

According to Carlos Torres, education is an inherently political practice. The choices made in its conception and implementation cause some groups to be included or excluded. This is no less true for adult education (AE). Following in the tradition of Paulo Freire, Torres has written a book that provokes a deeper understanding of the sociological, political, and economic influences in AE. By providing a supporting theoretical framework, Torres couples AE with social justice, in order to strengthen the struggle against the forces of oppression and globalization, and he gives researchers in AE the tools they need in order to broaden the scope of their research.

Torres recognizes the immense power of AE to transform lives and its central role in the development of social policy. As an important vehicle for social change, AE, he argues, relies on different developmental and participatory models. Based on extensive research, the author outlines these models, classifies them into explanatory paradigms, and describes how the choice of model is determined by the desired learning outcome. The decision-making process in these models ranges from authoritarian to collaborative, which inform the entire context of AE in its local or national context. For example, these learning outcomes may include the betterment of the individual to the benefit of the state, such as in literacy training. Another model of AE might seek to increase the productivity of rural areas.

In addition, Torres provides a framework for analyzing the roles of the state, individual, and teachers, and their interactions in AE. More important, Torres does not limit himself to a simple description of what is; rather, he pushes his framework further, in order to provide analytical lenses through which a researcher can see the influences on and within each model. These analytical lenses are constitutional mandates, human capital investment, political socialization, compensatory legitimization, international pressures, and social movements. Each lens is summarized and provides a springboard into Torres's central thesis of the fight against globalization.



Torres links globalization to various neoliberal policies enacted by many states in the last 25 years and their impact on AE, especially in Latin America. He states that neoliberal policies adopted by the state, as they pertain to AE, serve the agendas of multinational and bilateral organizations such as the World Bank or the IMF, rather than the needs of a particular community. He also describes the increasingly organized resistance to these policies by social movements, community organizations, and critical intellectuals. In addition, these challenges are part of a greater trend to understand, react to, or combat globalization. Torres describes the pernicious effects that globalization has on decision making, be it on an international, a national, or local scale. That being said, Torres takes hope from the fact that the struggle against globalization and global homogenization can be done through AE and benefit disadvantaged classes in society.

This book would be most useful to AE researchers with a strong interest in social justice. It provides several useful tools, such as clear models and analytical lenses, which could inform future research. Torres states that Critical Theory and other concepts inherent to social justice have not often been applied to AE, and he succinctly provides the tools for this. Through the deliberate linking of the well-developed field of political sociology with the under-researched field of AE, he develops a flexible framework to inspire more research. This book could also provide a theoretical road map for those individuals and communities struggling against authoritarian systems and globalization, in order to champion the human rights of marginalized classes through the power of AE.

Notwithstanding the powerful theoretical frameworks provided by Torres, a solid grounding in the works of Freire, Critical Theory, and general political sociology is required for a complete understanding of this book. Readers coming at the book from a practitioner's point of view may find the material difficult to apply to their contexts. Many of the sections are written with brevity rather than depth in mind, and this has the unfortunate consequence of limiting the explanations of key concepts. There are very few concrete examples of the concepts under discussion. This book is heavy with political sociology theory with little to no discussion of AE practice. As a result, it sometimes seems as if AE is an afterthought rather than fully integrated into the discussion. This impression is often reinforced in the sections discussing globalization.

Overall, Torres succeeds in his objective to challenge the current models of AE. He has developed a logical theoretical framework, a toolkit, for potential researchers. At the same time, this book is heavy on theory and would benefit from more detailed explanations of key concepts.

**Review by**  
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