

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Dikerdem, Mehmet Ali (2013) Researching the recognition of prior learning: international perspectives [Book review]. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 35 (1) . pp. 124-126. ISSN 1470-126X [Article] (doi:10.1080/0158037X.2012.721949)

UNSPECIFIED

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/11070/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

PROOF COVER SHEET

Author(s): Mehmet Ali Dikerdem
Article title: BOOK REVIEW
Article no: CSCE 721949
Enclosures: 1) Query sheet
2) Article proofs

Dear Author,

1. Please check these proofs carefully. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author to check these and approve or amend them. A second proof is not normally provided. Taylor & Francis cannot be held responsible for uncorrected errors, even if introduced during the production process. Once your corrections have been added to the article, it will be considered ready for publication.

Please limit changes at this stage to the correction of errors. You should not make insignificant changes, improve prose style, add new material, or delete existing material at this stage. Making a large number of small, non-essential corrections can lead to errors being introduced. We therefore reserve the right not to make such corrections.

For detailed guidance on how to check your proofs, please see <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/production/checkingproofs.asp>.

2. Please review the table of contributors below and confirm that the first and last names are structured correctly and that the authors are listed in the correct order of contribution. This check is to ensure that your name will appear correctly online and when the article is indexed.

Sequence	Prefix	Given name(s)	Surname	Suffix
1		Mehmet Ali	Dikerdem	

Queries are marked in the margins of the proofs.

AUTHOR QUERIES

General query: You have warranted that you have secured the necessary written permission from the appropriate copyright owner for the reproduction of any text, illustration, or other material in your article. (Please see <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/preparation/permission.asp>.) Please check that any required acknowledgements have been included to reflect this.

AQ1 Please mention whether the price provided is for hardback or paperback.

AQ2 Please provide [Department, City, State(if US) and country] for author 'Mehmet Ali Dikerdem'.

How to make corrections to your proofs using Adobe Acrobat

Taylor & Francis now offer you a choice of options to help you make corrections to your proofs. Your PDF proof file has been enabled so that you can edit the proof directly using Adobe Acrobat. This is the simplest and best way for you to ensure that your corrections will be incorporated. If you wish to do this, please follow these instructions:

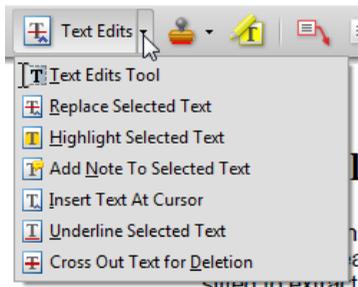
1. Save the file to your hard disk.
2. Check which version of Adobe Acrobat you have on your computer. You can do this by clicking on the “Help” tab, and then “About.”

If Adobe Reader is not installed, you can get the latest version free from <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

If you have Adobe Reader 8 (or a later version), go to “Tools”/ “Comments & Markup”/ “Show Comments & Markup.”

If you have Acrobat Professional 7, go to “Tools”/ “Commenting”/ “Show Commenting Toolbar.”

3. Click “Text Edits.” You can then select any text and delete it, replace it, or insert new text as you need to. If you need to include new sections of text, it is also possible to add a comment to the proofs. To do this, use the Sticky Note tool in the task bar. Please also see our FAQs here: <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/production/index.asp>.



4. Make sure that you save the file when you close the document before uploading it to CATS using the “Upload File” button on the online correction form. A full list of the comments and edits you have made can be viewed by clicking on the “Comments” tab in the bottom left-hand corner of the PDF.

If you prefer, you can make your corrections using the CATS online correction form.

BOOK REVIEW

5 **Researching the recognition of prior learning: international perspectives**, edited by Judy Harris, Mignonne Brier and Christine Wihak, Leicester, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (England and Wales), 2011, 344 pp., £24.95, ISBN 978-1-86201-460-2
AQ1 86201-460-2

10 This book is not for the fainthearted. If you require a text which gives you a comparative perspective on the degrees of uptake and embeddedness of the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member national higher education systems, this is the right compendium. It is also for those who labour at the coal face of further or higher education, mining the often latticed seams of ‘adult education’, ‘prior learning’,
15 ‘non-formal and informal learning’ and ‘experiential learning’. There are of course elective affinities between these and other themes in the book, including ‘lifelong’, ‘work-based’, ‘workplace’ learning and higher education policies in general, with the emphasis on the pedagogical relations between RPL and lifelong learning. The editors announce, correctly in my view, that ‘the field of RPL is emerging as a distinct area of research with its own body of scholarly literature’ (12) and that it is a ‘complex and contested’ area (11).

20 The hidden hand of capable and focused editing can be felt in the collection’s thematic coherence and informative analysis of the state-of-the-art research on national RPL regimes in higher education. The book is made up of a collection of contributions from the European Union (EU), OECD and six member states of the latter, including the United States (US), Australia, South Africa (SA) and Sweden. Britain is represented by two strong analytical contributions on RPL in England and Scotland. With two of the editors working in universities there, Canada merits three entries, two at federal level and a separate one for Quebec. This provides a useful
25 academic inventory of the different national higher education regimes currently operating the design and implementation of RPL especially the ‘islands of good practice’ in the OECD illustrated in Chapter 7.

30 Conceived in post-World War II US as a credit transfer or exchange system for returning veterans to enter university (Chapter 11), RPL has evolved over the past 40 years or more at the core of a range of higher education strategies. RPL has been adapted and adopted by governments variously as a driver of *widening participation* and *social inclusion*, (Chapters 3, 6 and 10) as *vocational competences*, as means of upgrading and re-skilling the labour force through *workforce development* in increasingly competitive global markets, and also as an *emancipatory adult education method*, (Chapters 5, 9 and 12 have useful insights into this) linked to more generic programmes, opening an often grudging academia to consider that knowledge can indeed be created outside its hallowed walls. The latter also marked shifts towards
35
40

2 Book review

more liberal and learner-centred andragogies as opposed to didactic and teacher-driven, discipline focused transmission of knowledge. Research reported from the US in Chapter 11 shows overwhelmingly that RPL students had higher rates of completion and got better marks at completion of courses than non-RPL ones even at the same institution.

Helen Pokorny (Chapter 5) hints at the tensions between instrumentalist conceptions of RPL as enhancing and upskilling labour supplies, and its transformative variants privileging the personal self-discovery and confidence building aspects through experiential and informal learning acknowledging the legitimacy of situated or context-based learning. Those of us, like me, who have professionally engaged with work-based learning but still have to justify our academic *bona fides* to sceptical colleagues basking in their disciplines, will find Angelia Wong's (Chapter 12) evaluation of RPL 'as a social movement . . . pressing universities for institutional change to facilitate the achievement of credentials by non-traditional groups of learners' (304) particularly encouraging. She is also right in suggesting that an academic paradigm shift is required for 'faculty members to appreciate different kind of knowledge production, as well as the complexities of learning and the circumstances in which it can take place' (301).

As the spirited contribution on SA by one of the editors (Chapter 9) hints, beyond the 'clash of discourses' (the technical – market *versus* critical-radical among others) lie real issues of funding and resourcing to back up the rhetoric of equal access to a democratic and emancipatory higher education system. In one of her case studies she highlights the significance of the combination of teaching skills with pastoral skills to reshape teachers as 'masters of what Aristotle has called practical wisdom or *phronesis*, a form of knowledge and disposition that incorporates both the abstract and the particular and enables the individual to negotiate that particular in the light of a general ethical understanding' (216). There is evidence elsewhere in the book, however, that the world economic crisis is tending to reinforce the narrower and instrumentalist variants of RPL, such as cut price in-house training and continuing professional development schemes undertaken by vocationally oriented higher education institutions. In a way, this raises the issue of 'What are universities for?' in the current crisis ridden conjunctures of the global economy – but that is another topic although there are echoes of this substantive question in this useful, well researched and 'specialist appropriate' collection.

AQ2

Mehmet Ali Dikerdem
Middlesex University

Email: m.dikerdem@mdx.ac.uk

© 2012, Mehmet Ali Dikerdem

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2012.721949>