
Community Education, Learning and Development: 3rd Edition,

Lyn Tett,

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**Reviewed by Kirsty Smith, Community Learning and Development Worker,
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Like me, many readers will know Lyn Tett's "Community Education" from their student days: as key text for Scottish Community Education students, this was one of the first books I read about the profession. Her book was accessible, informative and practical; the updated 3rd edition is no different.

In this edition there is a new first chapter which explores the history of many of the ideological debates and theoretical underpinning of our work: this is a welcome addition, linking theory with practice and describing the many hats we wear as educators as a result of policy and trend. In successive chapters her history of community education in Scotland is succinct and informative and we are given an insight into community learning and development practice today through interesting case studies which make the different strands of our work real to the reader; some of these are new to the 3rd edition and some have appeared before. I learnt a great deal about literacy and family learning work in the second edition from the case study, printed here in chapter 4, and while I enjoyed reading it again in this 3rd edition, I feel an opportunity to highlight some of the interesting work happening today was missed. There is an excellent new chapter from Ian Fyfe on Youth Participation which captures the paradoxical representations of young people in public discourse and the resulting demands put upon youth work services. In the following chapter on Community Development the author sensitively describes the many challenges faced by community development practitioners in Scotland today: balancing the needs of the community with policy demands.

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In a book which seeks to depict our profession today, Tett's use of *Community Education* throughout to describe our work didn't sit well with me. As a Community Learning and Development (CLD) worker, to me, Community Education describes my profession's history and not its present state. Like Tett I feel that there is a clear difference between education and learning. To me education implies a power imbalance which misses the voluntary involvement of participants; learning, on the other hand, allows room for shared reflection, and development. It would seem that the author disagrees:

"This change in language also reflected a shift to the more individualistic concept of 'learning' in contrast to 'education,' because the latter term always implies a relationship between the educator and the student. Moreover, the role of the educator is to provide guiding ideas about the purpose, content and direction of the learning expected to take place. The curriculum that is developed is then negotiated with the participants, but if these underpinning ideas are hidden then it is less open. If the emphasis is only on learning as a process there is a lack of recognition that it matters what people learn and what they learn it for." (Tett 2010:25)

But for me education is not a suitable description of our developmental work in building community capacity with or within community councils, rural partnerships, youth forums and other voluntary and community organisations.

I was also uncomfortable with her statement that "*Community educations primary purpose is education **within** and **for** communities*" (Tett 2010:1). I am clear that within my own practice I aim to work **with** communities. At a time when there is increasing pressure on the public purse and greater demand for funding I feel we need to be very clear about what it is that sets us apart from related disciplines and while the content of the book accurately describes the potential of CLD to change the fortunes of people and communities I did not always agree with her definitions.

Tett is not neutral; this book is political, fitting for a profession in which emancipatory education is the aim; but she never makes her standpoint explicit. Thus, a reader unfamiliar with CLD history, theory and practice might assume some of her

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views to be fact rather than opinion. However, I agree with much of Tett's position and welcomed the punchiness of this third edition; I think as a profession we need to reclaim some of our radical history.

This book should continue to be *the* book for Scottish students of community education/learning and development, as it accurately describes the history and nature of CLD work in Scotland today. It should also be a book on every CLD practitioner's shelf as it describes our long and powerful heritage of transforming education and reminds us why we chose this challenging profession.

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