Chapter 1
Interdependence: Inescapable Reality or Utopia?

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Introduction

These days, adult education within the context of blended shore program delivery has become quite an industry. It seems that education is becoming more and more of a commodity that is exported to emerging economies by “first world” institutions. Moral codes and values are imposed upon consumers of these adult education programs, making this enterprise just as hegemonic in its colonizing of modern minds as the previous conquest of their territories. In our respective countries, at the same time, we do not further the practice of adult education with rigorous research, serious preparation of its professionals, or sound evaluation of programs and practitioners. There is a danger of malpractice in such activities if adult educators do not mindfully and critically examine their practice and learn through reflection and analysis. If we are to maintain a commitment to adult education as a means for education, training, and development leading to social sustainability, then the impact of our practice needs to be examined. In today’s global education community, we need to be knowledgeable partners in the design and delivery of such programs.

This book seeks to share the lessons learned about international and transnational adult education with candid narrations about the design, development, and delivery of programs by experienced practitioners. It will contribute to, if not establish, the knowledge base for a blended shore approach to adult education. This is a knowledge base that values social interdependence and respect for indigenous wisdoms and it supports a professional practice of adult education in any setting, clearly rooted in an examined praxis with accountable practitioners.
In this chapter I suggest that critical reflection, informed by constructionist ideas, scaffolds the essential conceptual frame for learning with one another for a mindful (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) inter- and cross-cultural praxis of adult education in international and transnational contexts. In particular, we uphold a concept of blended shore adult education program design and delivery put forth later in this book. Interdependence as a shared value is firmly undergirding this framework for the analysis and synthesis of our adult education praxis in a global context. This book moves from theoretical and philosophical considerations to a description of practical tools. This first chapter frames the approach to interacting with the practitioners in that it presents critical reflection, within a value of interdependence, as the method to analyzing the viewpoints. The first part of the book builds four pillars of rich, theoretical, and philosophical considerations on development, lifelong learning, spirituality, and standardization in blended shore adult education. The second part of the book chronicles studies and stories of international, transnational, and cross-cultural training, education, and development programs in a variety of settings across the continents. We move to the nuts-n-bolts section in the last chapter of the book, which delineates design and delivery aspects and practices for successful blended shore adult education endeavors. Readers may find it more appealing to back into the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings by reading first the base of practical recommendations in the last chapter.

Education, Training, and Development

The origins of this book lay in my reflections about the purpose and practice of adult education as shared with educators around the world. For 27 years, I have met formally trained teachers, certified educators, community activists, and academic scholars as well as organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) in the USA, Europe, and Asia who are committed to personal and professional development, transformation and change, and performance improvement, and who believe in achieving individual improvement and social system change by means of education. Among them I have met kindred spirits who were willing to question ideologies, their own and those of others, in order to advance our profession and serve the needs of learners and institutions. In my development as an adult educator over the years, I have learned to stand back and look for commonalities with other practitioners and students upon which I could base next steps, when my own ideology did not guide me well in meeting the needs of adult learners. Surprisingly, at first, I came to realize that the intersection of our varied praxes can be found in our practices of facilitating the learning process. We find the common ground of our respective praxis in how we design and deliver our training, education, and development activities. Fundamentally, when we understand the difference between the constructs of training, education, and development with the corresponding roles we play and appropriate tools we use do we move away from, wittingly or unwittingly, malpracticing based