Development in Practice consistently manages to publish papers which illuminate the practical issues which challenge those who work in development, but it has never been afraid to address theory, providing a welcome antidote to some of the anti-intellectualism apparent in some sections of the NGO world. The only real weakness of this collection is that readers of Development of Practice will of course have most of this material already.

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These publications are both A4 size work packs in ring binders. Changing Directions is a pack of flexible and immediately useable interactive materials offering a wider curriculum, for use with adults concerned to better understand changes in society, and to make positive changes in their own lives. Chapters include: The Future of Work, Unemployment, Communications and Democracy, Facing the Figures, Identity and Resistance, and Challenging and Changing. This pack has grown directly from a course entitled ‘Changing Directions’ running at Ruskin College, Oxford. This course was established for unemployed or partially employed people wanting a broader opportunity to reconsider their relationship to employment. In this context, both the course and the materials are a refreshing anecdote to the plethora of narrowly focused job-related courses and materials. The central focus of the work pack is a consideration of many aspects of unemployment and changing labour markets, and each chapter provides useful summaries of topical debates and issues, and discussion themes and activities.

Older and Bolder consists of materials for use with discussion groups (or on widely different courses) focused on ageing. Chapters include: Running a Group, Listening Skills, Myths About Changing, Better Government for Older People, Raising the Issues, and Creative Writing. The foreword for the publication claims that this pack is very relevant. ‘It is a very effective tool to helping older people, with little or no past learning experiences to begin to value themselves and what they have to offer’. The pack, with its
wide range of self-contained topic areas, contains many stimulating group activities, and is aimed at non-professionals who want to learn and to become more active in the community.

Both publications then contain flexible and valuable practical materials for groups, networks and organisations concerned with unemployment and ageing. This focus will be warmly welcomed by readers of the Community Development Journal, but it also highlights some problems.

Given the current rhetoric in many countries on social exclusion and Life-long Learning (and also Widening Participation and Open Pathways), the publications are indeed highly relevant. However, given the mismatch, in the UK at least, between rhetoric, policy and practice, and the major emphasis on accreditation and credentialism, there are few resources and limited educational development support for non-accredited adult education. In effect, this may mean that some of the groups and networks aimed at may not even be aware of these publications. Ironically, the publications would probably have had much greater exposure and ‘selling-power’ in the 1980s than in the current climate. Then non-accredited adult education and informal learning was located and supported in a wide range of settings such as community centres and the network of more than 200 TUC Unemployed Centres, and supported by a wide variety of institutions and organisations which were explicitly funded for this informal, non-accredited work. (This included the Workers’ Educational Association, Local Authorities Adult Education Services, voluntary organisations, and university adult education departments.) The terrain and the map has changed considerably since then, and the funding mechanisms now for non-accredited work are extremely limited. This is not to imply that the publications reviewed here are out of date or old fashioned. Rather, they raise the issue of funding and support for self-directed collective learning, and informal learning in community settings.

Community workers and organisations involved in community settings will find these publications a valuable and stimulating resource, but the authors have also provided a salutary and important reminder that learning should not necessarily be controlled or packaged from institutionalised educational providers which are focused primarily or exclusively on formal accreditation.

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