

Adult Education Philosophies: Radical Orientation

A radical orientation hinges on the idea that people are a product of their social position (class, race, gender, etc). In radicalism it is critical to understand how these orientations shape our thoughts, views and freedoms (Lange, 2006). All education is viewed as political under this philosophy, and the focus of education is to transform society, and orient learning towards social justice (Quigley, 1996).

As an adult education philosophy in practice, radicalism is exemplified by the Antigone Movement, the Highlander Folkschool, and more recently the "Idle No More" First Nations Movement. In this approach, the purpose of education is to empower the learners to create fundamental changes to society that will ultimately liberate them from oppression which is rooted in socioeconomic and class marginalization (Tisdell & Taylor, 2000; Quigley, 1996; Zinn, 2007). This is accomplished through consciousness-raising, radical reorganization, social justice and social action (Quigley, 1996; Zinn, 2007). The learners role is to engage in self and societal liberation through the interrogation of their daily reality, engagement in ideological critique and discussions of strategies for social action (Lange, 2006).

The teacher's role in the radical orientation is one of coordinator; they are equal with the learner and may suggest directions (Quigley, 1996; Zinn, 2007). Radicalism includes methods such as critical and feminist theories and key figures in this philosophy include Freire, Illich, Kozor, Shor, and Habermas. Radicalism has been criticized for its over-optimistic viewpoint in the good of humanity; it ignores that individuals may exercise self-interest (Lange, 2006). The role of instructor in this philosophy has been criticized as potentially problematic if educators are from more dominant social groups,

or if educators assume to have the influence to transform or empower others (Lange, 2006).