

Popular Education, Social Movements and Activism

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Introduction

I was asked to write this course using my own book *Teaching Defiance: Stories and Strategies for Activist Educators* as the set text. The course was conducted in 2007 and I am now posting a revised version of the text for anyone who might be interested.

Study involved a combination of reading, reflection, tasks and the completion of two assignments. One of the assignments was ‘an annotated log’ in which participants were asked to keep a record of the readings done, and of the reflection exercises and tasks completed in each session. The other assignment was a paper analysing the educational aspects of a social movement or campaign.

Delivery was in straightforward ‘distance mode’. It was assumed that for the most part participants would be studying the subject on their own, that some would be living in isolated communities, and that contact with the course co-ordinator would be limited to occasional email and phone. The reflections and the tasks were designed with this in mind. However you will see that sometimes there are suggestions on how the reflections and tasks might be conducted in pairs or a group. These options were placed there in case participants could find someone to share some of the study with—an unofficial participant such as a partner or friend, or one or more of the other students.

I have appended a list of other readings and instructions about the assessment tasks.

I hope that you find the course or parts of it interesting, and that there are ideas you can use.

Michael Newman
November 2007

Session 1: The course program

The course title

The title of the course has three elements – popular education, social movements, and activism. Let us spend a little time on each concept.

Popular education: Jim Crowther, Vernon Galloway and Ian Martin in their book *Popular Education: Engaging the Academy* (2005: 2) distinguish between *populist* education – education aimed at being popular in that it is attractive, light and entertaining – and *popular* education, which they see as ‘rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people’.

Reflection:

Does this distinction make sense for you? Can you come up with examples of what they would describe as ‘populist education’? Can you come up with some examples of what they describe as ‘popular education’? Does your hard copy or on-line dictionary throw any light on the various meanings of the word ‘popular’?

Social movements: This is one of those terms which seems to have a clear meaning and yet, when we examine it, covers many different kinds of social phenomena. We often see references to the environmental movement, the women’s movement, and the union movement. These are all independent from government. Or are they? We also see reference to the community health movement. Usually this involves independent groups and government-aided health groups working together. Some social movements develop suddenly in response to a particular challenge. The mass demonstrations in early 2003 against Australia’s planned involvement in the invasion of Iraq are an example. Other social movements develop slowly and are ongoing. The Australian Labor Party would be an example. Some movements are constructed on resistance as in the case of the anti-nuclear weapons movement of the 1960s, some are concerned with both resistance and development as in the case of the modern peace movement, and others are focussed on development as in the case of the Christian Meditation movement.

Reflection:

What do these different movements have in common? What *is* a social movement?

Activism: When we talk of a person’s activism we are talking of her or his commitment to a cause as it is expressed in the actions she or he takes. So the title of the course carries three concepts which all imply working for a cause. This means that we will be looking at education that encourages people to not just learn about a cause but to engage in action to promote that cause. We will be looking at one-sided education. We will be looking at *learning as a tool to be used in struggle*.

Reflection:

How comfortable are you with the idea of one-sided education? Some education claims to be objective, balanced, detached and neutral. Is this really possible? Other education abandons the effort to be balanced and neutral and takes sides. Is this honest or dishonest education? Can education really be a tool in struggle?

The program:

Go back to the table of contents and have a look at the list of titles for the twelve sessions of the course.

Reflection:

What was your very first reaction?

To complete this session

1. Read the instructions (appended to end of this document) on keeping an annotated log. Now start your log, recording each of the reflections you were asked to engage in during this session just completed, and recording in one or two sentences the major points in your reflections. Remember this is simply a log, a brief record of the actual progress through the course, not a detailed description. Each entry should be brief, a record that will be enough to jog your memory.
2. Browse through the course reader and acquaint yourself with the titles of the texts there

AND DO NOT FORGET, the course has a set text. It is *Teaching Defiance: Stories and Strategies for Activist Educators* by Michael Newman. You will to have your own copy with you when you work on each session. Please make sure you have it with you from the next session onwards.

Session 2: Assessment and the set text

Assessment

There will be two assessment tasks. One will consist of the annotated log which you have already started. The log is to be updated after each meeting of the course.

Reflection: The log only works if you complete it as soon as possible after having completed a session. How can you organise your time to do this?

The second assessment task will involve researching, describing, analysing and reflecting on a campaign by a social movement or an example of popular education located within a social movement, or actually planning a campaign and building the educational aspects into that campaign.

Task

Read the instructions for the second assignment appended to the end of this document and then put them aside. Obviously you can think about the second assignment but you should not start any detailed work on it until you have completed several sessions of the course.

The set text:

The remainder of this session will be devoted to getting to know the set text *Teaching Defiance*.

Before actually reading a book, it can be useful to acquaint yourself with it. Often by doing this, when you do come to read the book, you do it more easily since you have an idea of what to expect and of how the author ‘operates’, both as a thinker and as a writer.

Acquaint yourself with *Teaching Defiance* in the following ways:

- Hold the book in your hands. The quality of a publication can tell you something about the publisher’s commitment to and relationship with the author and the subject. Do you know of this publisher? Has the publisher done a good job?
- Riffle through the pages and look at the font, the size of the font, and the layout.
- Now look at the cover and spend a few minutes finding out what you can about the book from what is written there – the title, the description of the book on the inside of the dustcover, comments on the back, etc.
- Look at the title page inside the book and at the byline which reads: ‘A book written in wartime ...’

Reflection: What do you make of that byline? Is it necessary? Does it intrigue you, worry you, or put you off? Read the second paragraph of the preamble in *Teaching Defiance*, on page xi. What are your feelings about the byline now?

Go on looking at the book:

- Go to the references on page 289, and run your eye down the list of authors cited in the book. Are there authors there you have read? Can you identify three? Are there any authors you know of but have not read? Are there any authors you have heard speak in real life? Are there any authors you actually know? (There may well be one hidden somewhere in that list!)
- Go to the index on page 297. Run your eye down the index and identify three *items* that get multiple mentions. Identify three *people* who get multiple mentions. Do these multiple mentions tell you anything about the book?
- Go to the table of contents on page v. Have a look through.

Reflection

We do not always start a book from the beginning. From the table of contents, which chapter heading attracts you most?

Back to the book:

- Go to page 221 and read the first paragraph.

Reflection

What do you make of the writing style? Do you think the book will be easy to read? A chore? Flick through and find another paragraph. Read the paragraph. What do you think now?

Preparation for the next session:

Read the first chapter of *Teaching Defiance*. It is called 'Taking Sides' and is on pages 3 to 13. And if you would like to know a little about Michael Newman, the author, then go to www.michaelnewman.info.

Session 3: Influences, beliefs and missions

Influences and beliefs

In the first chapter of *Teaching Defiance* Newman tells us what makes him tick. He lists a number of theorists and theories he ‘subscribes to’ or ‘likes’. He comes back to all of them in more detail later in the book but in this passage in this first chapter he simply ‘throws’ them at the reader, in an uncompromising and unelaborated fashion. Have a look at the passage again, starting at the bottom of page 3 and going over to the top of page 5.

Reflection:

Is this too much so early in the book?

Is there a belief there that you ‘subscribe to’ or ‘like’?

Reflection:

Newman says: ‘I understand that we are utterly alone but that our existence as conscious beings depends on the company of others.’ Do you agree or disagree? Do you find this a sad or foolish or exhilarating or challenging idea?

Look at some of the other ideas. Be ready to disagree. The writer is just another person like anyone else – eats breakfast, has moods, gets things wrong as well as right from time to time.

As you read the book you will see that Newman constantly tries to devise educational activities which will bring people together to learn and to act collectively. He sees education as a way of defeating the sense of being ‘utterly alone’. So this particular belief of his—that we live our lives trapped inside our own awareness—clearly influences his practice.

Task

On a sheet of paper, jot down three theories or theorists or ideas you ‘subscribe to’ or ‘like’. You can use some of Newman’s if you want to or you can ignore his ideas altogether. You may not be able to come up with the names of theorists or an outline of theories in the way he has, but try to list three people or ideas or ways of thinking or beliefs that influence your work as an educator.

In keeping with Newman’s desire to fight the idea of being alone, if you can, share your ideas with someone, in person, by phone or by email. If you cannot, then get up and walk around the kitchen table three times, come back to your list with a fresh eye and reflect on it for another few minutes.

Newman came up with his list while sitting in his study and writing his book. He took his time. You have been asked to come up with some influences during the course of this one session, so do not feel you have to stand by them or defend them. Be ready to change or refine or revise or improve on the ideas and influences on your list.

Mission

On page 10 Newman states a mission. Read it again. He has taken the theories and theorists he likes and summarised them in the form of a mission statement starting with the words: 'Our job is to ...'

Reflection:

What are the two key points in that mission statement? How do you feel about this concept of defiance? Are you comfortable with it or uncomfortable with it? Can we really teach defiance?

Task

Take your three theorists, theories or influences and have a go at summarising them in the same way. If you like, start with the words: 'My (or our) job is to ...' If that does not work, then simply jot down what you feel your intention or 'mission' as an educator is. This does not have to be complex or detailed. It can be quite specific: 'My job is help my mate Larry improve his reading and writing.' Or it can be quite general: 'My job is to help others learn how to get the best out of life.' Of course, if you feel you can or want to, write a longer, more detailed mission.

Reflection:

Do the tour of the kitchen table and review the mission one more time. Ask yourself: 'How can I use this course to help me achieve my mission?'

Preparation for the next session

Read chapter 4 in the set text. It is on page 61 and is called 'Defiance, Choice and Consciousness'. (It will help if you read chapters 2 and 3. They contain stories and descriptions of teaching, and lead into chapter 4.)

Session 4: Choice

Choice

Newman opens his book with the words: 'At its heart this book is about choice. It examines how we can help ourselves and others understand that we do have choices, and then learn how to make defiant choices.' So let us look at the chapter called 'Defiance, Choice and Consciousness' (on page 61).

Take a moment to reread the section of the chapter under the heading 'Choice' on pages 62 to 64. These two and half pages are essentially a discussion of the quote from Rick Turner on page 62. So now read the Turner quote carefully one more time.

Reflection:

Is Turner right? Can we really choose about anything?

Have you ever felt you were being sucked into the future? Can you give an example?

Was it inevitable or did you let it happen?

In your role as educator, have you ever helped someone resist being sucked into an undesirable future? Can you give an example?

Did you help that person or those people understand that they actually could make choices themselves?

Newman treats Turner's passage a little like a piece of poetry and talks about style, repetition, rhythms and cadences as well as the meaning.

Reflection:

Do you like this? Is it relevant in a book about adult education?

Newman also gives some biographical details about Turner and speculates on the influences in his writing.

Reflection:

Do you find this helpful? Or should we just stick with what the text actually says?

Free, trapped, partially free

Remind yourself of the section of the chapter headed 'Breaking the silence' on pages 70 and 71.

Turner says that theoretically we can choose about anything but he goes on in the same book to remind us that in all societies other people limit what we do (1980: 53):

The criterion for freedom cannot be whether or not people limit what I do, since this occurs in all societies. Rather we must define a free society as one in which (a) the limits are as wide as possible; (b) all individuals have a say in deciding where it is necessary for those limits to be; and (c) all individuals know how and why they are being limited.

In saying this Turner is drawing on the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who argues that simply by exercising our own freedom to act we necessarily limit the freedom of someone else. And the opposite is equally the case. When others exercise their freedom, they limit ours. Other people, just by being there, will always limit what we do. In the play *Huis Clos*, Sartre famously has one of the characters say: ‘Hell is other people’.

The American adult educator Jack Mezirow talks of the being trapped rather than free, *of being caught in our own history and continually reliving it* (1981). This is that phenomenon where we do something against our own wishes because of our psychological make-up or history, or because of deeply embedded assumptions or prejudices, or because of the expectations of our society or culture. We go on making the same mistake even though we know it is a mistake. We stay in the job. We keep having rows with our teenage daughter. We drink when we do not want to. We react uneasily or in an embarrassed way in the presence of people of a different colour ...

Newman argues that we willingly give up certain freedoms in exchange for services, a sense of belonging, and security. And he points to the fact that we unwillingly or unknowingly give up our freedom to ‘common sense’ opinion, to advertisers, to propaganda, to our peers, or to so called ‘experts’. Others, he says, are laying out our futures for us.

This makes grim reading but Mezirow offers transformative learning as a way out of the trap. Newman offers the teaching of defiance.

Reflection:

Just how free are we? Just how free are the learners we work with? How can we enhance their freedom? How can we teach choice? How can we as educators help people gain control of their own futures?

Consciousness

Newman seems to believe that choice and consciousness must go together: we cannot be fully conscious if we are not making choices for ourselves, and we cannot choose effectively unless we are fully conscious. He examines a number of different kinds of consciousness—meditative, contemplative, critical and two forms of consciousness described by Sartre (and known as ‘thetic’ and ‘non-thetic’ consciousness)—but opts for a very active kind of consciousness ‘to be found in the continual expression of will’.

Task:

Pause for a moment. Consider your consciousness. It is easy to be conscious, but can you be conscious of your consciousness? What kind is it? How might yours differ from others?

This is a difficult chapter. Newman purposely jumps from topic to topic. He has chosen to talk of the death of a friend. But he is exploring concepts essential to understanding the mysterious process of learning. Living and learning, he is saying, are about being truly

aware, about struggling against limitations, about resisting some of our futures, and about making significant and sometimes defiant choices.

Reflection:

What do you make of the chapter as a whole?

Preparation for next session:

Read 'Defining popular education' by Rick Flowers (Reading 1)

Read 'Social change education: Context matters' by Kathryn Choules (Reading 2).

Read the passage from 'Teaching Adults' by Tom Nesbit, Linda Leach and Griff Foley (Reading 3)

Session 5: Popular Education – Definitions, confusions, characteristics and practice

Definitions, confusions and characteristics

Rick Flowers, in the chapter entitled ‘Definitions of popular education’ from his thesis *Informal and Popular Education in Youth and Community Work* (Reading 1), suggests that the term popular education is a contested one and sets out to clear up some of the misconceptions. But the misconceptions are largely to do with the origin of the term itself, rather than the particular range of educational practices it is now used to refer to. On page 63 of his thesis Flowers summarises what he sees as the essential features of popular education and then sets out a table on pages 64 and 65 comparing characteristics of popular education with those of what he calls ‘dominant/traditional’ education. Look through those again.

Daniel Schugurenski (2001:516) (in slightly more formal language than Flowers uses) lists the following features he sees as characterising popular education:

- A rejection of the political neutrality of adult education, recognising instead the connection between knowledge and power and between structure and agency, and the acknowledgement that adult education can play a role not only in reinforcing but also in challenging oppressive social relations;
- An explicit political commitment to work with the poor and the marginalised and to enable social movements to attain ‘progressive’ social and economic change;
- A particular pedagogy that focuses on the collective, originates from the people’s daily lived experience, and promotes a dialogue between popular knowledge and systematised (scientific) knowledge;
- A conscious attempt to relate education to social action, linking critical reflection to research, mobilisation, and organisational structures.

Jim Crowther, Vernon Galloway and Ian Martin (2005:2) give this explication of popular education:

Popular education is understood to be popular, as distinct from merely populist, in the sense that it is:

- Rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people
- Overtly political and critical of the status quo
- Committed to progressive social and political change.

Popular education is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression, and is informed by an equally clear political purpose. This has nothing to do with helping the ‘disadvantaged’ or the management of poverty; it has everything to do with the struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order.

The process of popular education has the following general characteristics:

- Its curriculum comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle
- Its pedagogy is collective, focused primarily on group as distinct from individual learning and development
- It attempts, wherever possible, to forge a direct link between education and social action.

Kathryn Choules uses the phrase ‘social change education’ to encompass popular education and critical pedagogy. She looks at popular education in differing social contexts, extending Schugurenski’s definition beyond ‘a commitment to the poor and the marginalised’ and considers the challenges of doing so.

Reflection:

How do Schugurenski, Flowers, and Crowther and his colleagues, and Choules compare? Do they differ seriously on anything important?

Newman does not use the term ‘popular education’ in *Teaching Defiance*. From what you now know of his book (remember his ‘Stating a Mission’ in chapter 1), to what extent is his thinking in harmony or at odds with Flowers’, Schugurenski’s, the Crowther team’s , and Choules’ ideas? Do you sense any major difference?

The practice of popular education

But what do popular educators do? The short answer is anything. But that anything will be informed by the ideas, principles and processes described by Flowers, Schugurenski and Crowther, Galloway and Martin, and Choules.

The second piece you were asked to read in preparation for this session was by Nesbit, Leach and Foley (Reading 2). It made reference to two educators. These were Myles Horton and David Head. The reading hinted at how they actually went about their educational work.

Reflection:

From your readings so far, from your own experience, from what you can gather about Horton and Head, speculate on the skills and qualities needed by a popular educator.

Draw up a list of skills.

Draw up a list of qualities.

To complete this session

Read Readings 3, 4 and 5. Reading 4 is an article written by David Head in 1977, recounting and reflecting upon his work with homeless people in inner London. It is called ‘Education at the Bottom’ and is a superb example of reflection on practice. Reading 5 is a chapter entitled ‘Workshops’ from a book called *The Long Haul*. It is an autobiography of Myles Horton, compiled from taped interviews of Horton by Judith

Kohl and Herbert Kohl. Reading 6 is a chapter 'The Radical Opposition' from *Adult Education in Great Britain* (1972) by Thomas Kelly. It provides a background to the claims by Flowers, and Crowther, Galloway and Martin that popular education has a rich history deriving from nineteenth century independent working class education.

Preparation for the next session

Flowers stated that the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has had an enormous influence on educational practice and on popular education in particular (so much so that some people have erroneously attributed the origins of the term and the practice of popular education to him). Do some surfing of the Net (as always treat anything you read on the web with caution, unless it is clearly from a refereed and verifiable source):

Do a search using the name 'Paulo Freire' and see how many entries come up.

Read the Wikipedia entry on Paulo Freire. It provides you with a very short biography and a short review of the influences on his thinking.

Read Mark Smith's short summary of Freire's life and work on Infed, the informal education homepage. The home page is at <http://www.infed.org> and the entry on Freire is at <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm>.

Session 6: Naming the world

Freire's writing

Freire's writing can be difficult to read. There are several reasons for this. He wrote his early texts in Portuguese, so we are reading translations and must expect that some of the fluency, clarity and nuances in the original have been lost. In his early texts Freire can write extensively in the abstract, theoretical mode without giving practical examples. The language is sometimes jarring to the modern eye because it is sexist, a combination of the characteristics of the language the texts were originally written in and the linguistic conventions of that day and age. And Freire draws on eclectic influences and a wide variety of thinkers. Often, after a few pages, we can get a feeling for a writer and her or his intellectual stance, and we can settle down and read more quickly, anticipating the line of argument. In Freire's case this is rarely the case. In a single paragraph there may be multiple influences—Marxism, existentialism, twentieth century liberation theology and even a kind of medieval nominalism—and so we are forced to read slowly and to think hard.

Here is a paragraph from the third chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn appears to the namer as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection (Freire, 1972: 60-61).

Reflection:

Read the passage through several times. Then work through it sentence by sentence. What influences can you find in it? What sense can you make of it?

Task:

Newman makes several references to Freire in *Teaching Defiance*. Using the index of *Teaching Defiance*, find and read those references. This may take a while since you may have to read several paragraphs which follow each reference. (You have already encountered the first two references, which occur in Billy's story.)

Dipping into a text like this can be both confusing and illuminating. Sometimes it is difficult to pick up the writer's train of thought when we simply start reading in the middle of a chapter. But it can also be liberating, since we take what we want, do our own thinking as we read and reach our own conclusions. If you find a particular passage you have fallen upon difficult to understand, do not worry. You can come back to this when you are reading the book in a more conventional way. If you find yourself making your own interpretations, enjoy them.

Naming the world

Come back to the passage in *Teaching Defiance* entitled 'Naming and renaming' on pages 207 to 210. Clearly for Newman this is the most significant feature of Freire's practice.

Remind yourself of the process by re-reading Newman's examples, on page 208, of renaming water in an alley-way, a polystyrene cup, and a bunch of flowers.

Task:

Try out the process of renaming. Take a common object—an orange, a television set, a potted plant, a croissant, a mobile phone, a wedding ring, an ipod—and name and rename it. See how many renamings you can do.

Now take an event or a situation—the Iraq war, the government's response to domestic abuse—and see whether you can rename that.

(If you try this in a group, then you need to agree amongst yourselves that you are engaging in an intellectual experiment and not a normal discussion. The renaming process can take us in unexpected directions, so be accepting and supportive of each other. And of course let anyone withdraw from the exercise if they wish.)

Reflection:

How could you use naming and renaming in your work as an educator?
Describe a way in which you might try to facilitate the process.

Task:

Find out a bit more about Freire and the way he worked. There is a detailed analysis of the paragraph by Freire quoted above in a book Michael Newman wrote in 1993 entitled *The Third Contract: Theory and Practice in Trade Union Training*. The book is accessible and downloadable for free on the web at www.michaelnewman.info. The discussion of the paragraph by Freire and of Freire's ideas is on pages 181 to 191 of the website version of *The Third Contract*.

If you would like to dig a little deeper into Freire's ideas and practice, then there has been much written on him. A significant book is *The texts of Paulo Freire* by Paul V. Taylor, published in 1993 by the Open University Press.

And of course read Freire himself. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is his most famous book.

Preparation for the next session

Read Chapter 15 'Teaching about action' in *Teaching Defiance*. (You have already read the first paragraph.)

Session 7: Social movements, learning and action

Threes

In the chapter 'Teaching action' in *Teaching Defiance* Newman 'talks in threes'. He is careful not to make great claims for his 'threes' but argues that he finds them useful when discussing action. He says he likes the device of the threes 'because it provides me with a way of describing, categorising and trying to understand what is a very messy business'.

Reflection:

What were your reactions to the chapter as a whole?
Do you find the device of the threes useful?

Task:

Flick through the chapter and write out the three categories of action, the three sites of action, the three domains of action, the three forms of control, the three kinds of social movement, and the three modes of learning. Either now or later set them out on a single page so that you can refer to them easily as a kind of checklist or analytical tool to help you in your major assignment.

The major assignment

At this point in the program you will need to begin detailed work on your major assignment. In essence you are asked to research and analyse a social movement with particular reference to the learning and education both within and resulting from the activities of the movement. Since social movements are collections of people engaging in action, they too can be untidy, even chaotic, affairs and your assignment may well be 'messy' itself, made up of stories, artefacts, diagrams, descriptions and analysis.

In preparation here are some points to consider:

You may need to decide on a definition of a social movement. Newman writes on page 235 of *Teaching Defiance*: 'Social movements are large, sometimes massive, groupings of people who join together to resist or bring about some kind of social, economic or political change.' Charles Tilly argues that 'the proper analogy to a social movement is neither a party nor a union but a political campaign. What we call a social movement actually consists in a series of demands or challenges to power holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position' (cited in Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:46).

Reflection

Can you improve on either of those definitions? How would you define the women's movement, the peace movement, the indigenous people's movement, the union movement, The World Social Forum, GetUp, Your Rights @ Work, Avaaz...?

You will have to select a social movement to research. Go to page 234 of *Teaching Defiance* and the section headed 'Kinds of social movement'.

Reflection

Do you feel Newman's three kinds of movement work? (As you read about social movements you will see that other writers categorise social movements in different ways.)

Newman gives examples for each of his kinds of social movement. Can you add some examples of your own to the lists?

Some writers like John Holford (1995), and Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1991:47) see social movements playing a dynamic, mediating role in the shaping of knowledge. Social movements are in effect massive acts of popular education. Their members learn together, take action together and learn together from that action. They reorganise existing knowledge, generate new bodies of knowledge, and disseminate that knowledge to the public at large. Some writers describe this phenomenon as 'cognitive praxis'. Eyerman and Jamison say: 'For us, social movements are bearers of new ideas, and have often been the sources of scientific theories and of whole scientific fields, as well as new political and social identities' (1991:3).

Consider the above in reference to the environmental movement and the women's movement. Both have generated an enormous amount of literature, to be found in all forms of the media – academic research, serious books, books aimed at the popular market, leaflets, blogs, websites, radio and television programs, documentaries on film, DVDs ... Both have run courses, held meetings, organised groups that meet regularly ...

Reflection:

Think of other movements, and identify examples of their 'cognitive praxis'.

Preparation for the next session

To help you get thinking about your assignment read Pierre Walter's article 'Adult learning in new social movements: Environmental protest and the struggle for the Clayoquot Sound rainforest', Reading 7. You will find three other articles (Readings 8, 9 and 10) in the reader dealing with adult education and social movements. Read, or at least acquaint yourself with them before the next session.

Session 8: Working on your major assignment

This session goes on from the last session and is given over to helping you get on with your major assignment.

Here are a number of points to consider and reflect on. Do not forget to take that brief break between each point.

Have you decided on a social movement to research? Some writers (Finger, 1989: Reading 6, and Welton, 1993: Reading 7, for example) divide social movements into 'old' and 'new' social movements. They do not agree entirely but 'old' movements are ones such as the churches, political parties and the trade union movement. 'New' movements are the environmentalists, the peace, movement and the women's movement. The distinctions are none too clear these days and some of the so called 'new' movements are at least forty years old. (Actually, if we include the people who fought for the creation of national parks in Australia, then the environmental movement stretches well back into the nineteenth century. If we include the suffragettes and their predecessors in the second half of the nineteenth century, then the women's movement is at least 140 years old.) Whether old or new, the movements listed above can be researched through reading from reasonably conventional sources, and you may be more comfortable with this more academic approach.

But movements appear and disappear, they grow and splinter, they develop new forms and use new forms of communication and action. So the trade union movement has recently spawned an active and exciting social movement under the slogan of 'Your Rights @ Work'. We can see this as a separate social movement and not just an activity of the existing trade union movement, since Your Rights @ Work has set up its own networks and modes of communication, makes extensive use of email and the net, and has established local action groups throughout the country. These groups are open to anyone, not just unionists. You might like to research and speculate on the educational aspect of this movement, using its printed literature, information from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and of course its presence on the Net.

Others, like Get Up and Avaaz.org, were established initially on the net and their action remains essentially internet-based (although they are both in the process of making a move from the virtual to the real world at the moment by setting up local groups or organising local events) Research here would be web-based for the most part.

You may find the scope of the examples given above a little too big, and look for a state-based campaign or a local campaign to describe, analyse and reflect upon. Look at the section headed 'Domains of action' in *Teaching Defiance* (pages 230 to 233). You might like to choose an example of social action or community action. Always the main aim is to identify describe and analyse the educational elements of the movement, campaign or action.

Reflection:

Speculate on the comments directly above. Which kind of movement do you feel most comfortable writing about? Do you already have a movement, campaign, or example of action in mind?

How will you go about your research? Will you make use mainly of material in print? Will you use the internet? Will you use the local papers? Will you visit places, and talk to people. Will you take just one example of popular education, analyse it and locate it in its social movement context. Al Gore's movie 'An inconvenient truth' was the initiative of one man but as he travelled the world giving his lecture he relied on the support of local environmental activists. To what degree does his film conform to the ideas on popular education explored in an earlier session?

In the course of doing this assignment you will be describing, reflecting and then analysing events, seeking to understand them from an educational perspective. Go to page 241 of *Teaching Defiance* and read again the last paragraph of the chapter which starts with the words: 'When Pitika Ntuli sent ...'

Reflection

Newman analyses the performance and Ntuli's intervention as 'a coherent educational event'. Do you agree? Does Newman's analysis hold water? Is this an example of analysis you could use?

In session 7 you were asked to compile a single page carrying Newman's 'threes' and keep the page for future reference.

Reflection:

Have a look at your compilation of Newman's threes. Is this a tool you could use to help you in your analysis?

Finally, you were asked to read several journal articles in preparation for this session. Walter's article is an example of what you are being asked to do: to take an example of a social movement in action, to describe and reflect on and analyse it. The others, by Finger, Welton and Holford, are more theoretical examinations of what you are writing about: understanding learning in social movements.

Reflection

How can you make the best use of these resources?

Preparation for the next session

Read Chapter 5 'Teaching choice' in *Teaching Defiance*.

Session 9: Rational discourse

For the remainder of the course we are going to concentrate on the text *Teaching Defiance*. You have read key chapters in Parts One and Two. Over the next four weeks you are expected to read Parts Three, Four and Five. We can summarise the remainder of the book by saying that Newman examines four processes:

- Teaching people to think clearly
- Teaching people to think imaginatively
- Teaching people to act
- Teaching people to act wisely

Rational discourse

Part Three carries chapters on problem solving, meetings, dialogue, and negotiation. If there is a unity to this Part Three it is that in all these activities we make use of talk, of essentially logical communication, of what Newman describes more formally as 'rational discourse'. Read the opening paragraph on page 75.

Newman suggests that in much of our lives we remain silent, or we 'fall silent'. It is the educator's role to help break this silence, to get people talking about children in detention, the Iraq war, the treatment of the indigenous people, the disparity in wealth between ordinary working people and the extremely wealthy, the fact that amidst the creation of wealth we can still have homeless people ...

Reflection

Can you identify any areas of concern about which society as a whole has fallen silent, about which you have fallen silent?

Some might argue that for those in power it is sometimes convenient if we fall silent. It has been argued, for example, that various powers and corporations were slow to take action on the sale of cigarettes because of the vested interest of tobacco farmers, the enormous amount of money to be made from the industry, and the revenue from taxes.

Reflection

Can you think of a possible current example?
How do you get your learners talking? How do you break the silence?

Problem-solving

Chapter 5 presents a problem-solving model. Newman offers it as a way of getting people to break the silence, to begin addressing a problem, to talk things through either as a kind of interior conversation with oneself, or in communication with others.

Newman tells the story of the art student, the candles and the lighter fluid, and how he managed to think the situation and his options through. Remind yourself of the story. It is from the bottom of page 77 to page 79.

Reflection:

Have you had an analogous experience, where you have been able to review a problem in detail?

The problem-solving model is summarised on page 83. On page 84, Newman says: 'People can be exhilarated when applying the model. It releases them from a state of inaction into action. It provides them with something orderly to do in the face of uncertainty and disorder. They have a procedure to follow.'

Reflection:

What was your reaction to the model? Did you think it obvious? Did you find features in it you could use? Is it a model you could teach?

Task:

For the next thirty minutes or so test the model yourself. If you can, find two or three others, and do this as a group exercise. If you are on your own, then simply work through the model, making a circuit of the kitchen table between each of the stages. Here is the problem:

You are the manager of a small water-purifying firm. You have an office staff of three people. \$12.40 is missing from the petty cash box. The box is kept in the outer office where the three secretarial/administrative staff have desks. The key to the petty cash box is normally kept in the drawer of your desk in the inner office. The key is missing.

Examine this problem. Take your time. Identify the facts - *all* of them. Tease out the issues from each of the facts. Decide on the options for dealing with the most significant of the issues. Decide on what action you will take.

Reflection:

Review the experience of using the model and consider how you could teach/use the model in your work.

Task:

Write a problem to use in your own teaching. Try to make it a problem sufficiently relevant to the learners you work with to catch their attention.

Newman argues that the basic model of FACTS, ISSUES, OPTIONS, ACTION provides the agenda for most meetings. It can also serve as the structure for writing reports, or making a speech, or arguing a case. It can be used as a model for designing and organising a campaign. It can be used in the course of preparing for negotiation. In essence Newman is arguing that the model can be used as a basis for most forms of rational discourse.

Reflection

Are Newman's claims for the model sustainable?

Preparation for the next session:

Read Chapter 12 'Nonrational discourse and insight' and Chapter 13 'Facilitating Insight' from *Teaching Defiance*.

Session 10: Nonrational discourse

Insight

Rational discourse can help us only so much, and so Newman goes on to examine how we can teach ourselves and others to think imaginatively, to open ourselves and our learners to insight, to engage in *nonrational* discourse.

Newman describes insight in a number of ways. He says it

- is an almost mystical, often seemingly accidental encounter with originality and creativity
- abruptly fills a gap
- completes some kind of schema we had only half-sensed was there
- is a moment of elation or horror
- is the conclusion without the preceding argument
- is a moment when, for good or bad, we speak with the gods
- is a new and shocking understanding of the whole.

Reflection

Which description do you prefer? Why? What does your preference tell you about yourself? What does it tell you about you as an adult educator?

On pages 178 and 179, Newman describes walking out on to a mountainside. He is trying to describe a moment of insight. He ends his description with these words: 'I was not overcome with awe as you can be in front of a wonderful painting. I was not an observer. I was part of it, *understanding* it.'

Reflection

Can you think of a moment in your life when you suddenly had that sense of total involvement, that sense of *understanding*?

Newman suggests that we cannot teach insight but that as educators we can create situations in which our learners might experience insight. In Chapter 13 'Facilitating insight' he gives a number of examples. You have already read some of this chapter when looking for references to Freire. And you have practised naming and renaming. So for this session, practise using metaphors. Newman describes a metaphor analysis exercise starting on the bottom of page 195 and going over to the top of page 197.

If you are on your own, circle your kitchen table between each stage. If you can, do this in pairs or groups of three. (You might like to remind yourself of the process of unpacking a metaphor by rereading the description of how Newman and a colleague unpacked a metaphor of a tightrope walker. The description starts from the middle of page 46 and goes over to just below the middle of page 47.)

Task

- Stage one: On your own write a metaphor for your work as an adult educator.
- Stage two: If you are on your own, leave the metaphor and come back to it some time later. If you are with others, share the metaphors.
- Stage three: If you are on your own, unpack your metaphor. If with others, unpack your metaphors in turn.
- Stage four: On your own again, review, revise and rewrite the metaphor.
- Stage five: If you are on your own, take a break and then review your new or revised metaphor. If you are with others, examine and evaluate the new metaphor. What, if any, are the differences from the first one? Does the new or revised metaphor encapsulate any learning or insights?

Newman suggests a number of ways of facilitating insight:

- using a novel
- using a poem
- using metaphor
- using role play
- moving from question to question
- naming and renaming
- using forum theatre

Task

Can you add any of your own? Using song, perhaps. Take one method from the list (including your additions) and speculate on how you could use it to facilitate insight in your own work as an adult educator.

To complete this session

Read Chapter 14 'Revisiting insight'. In it Newman talks of how the familiar can become explicit and he analyses a little more his walk on the mountainside. Spend some time thinking about the idea that rupture makes the familiar explicit. Can you use the idea? How do you get people to really *see* and *feel* things for the first time?

Preparation for the next session:

Re-read the passage on different categories of action. You will find it on page 224 to 226 in *Teaching Defiance*. Read Chapter 16 'Constructing moralities'.

Session 11: Deciding on action

Responsibility

Popular education can consist of a number of phases;

1. A group of people meet together to identify the forces holding them back and preventing them from taking control of their own lives. These ‘forces’ may be social, economic and/or political conditions. But they may also be organizations and actual people.
2. The group of people—let us now call them ‘learners’—work together to analyse and understand these forces in detail.
3. The learners examine the range of actions open to them to counteract or combat these forces.
4. The learners engage in that action.

The role of the educator has purposely been left out in the description immediately above. The popular educator’s role is to facilitate this process. She or he may even initiate the process by intervening in people’s lives (as David Head did) or she or he may be invited into a community, neighbourhood or district to help initiate the process (as was sometimes the case for Myles Horton).

Reflection

How far should the popular educator go? To stage 2? To stage 3? Or should the popular educator stay the distance and engage in the action alongside the learners? That is, go to Stage 4 and beyond? What exactly is the responsibility of an educator who conducts learning outside the safely defined context of an educational institution? What is the educator’s responsibility when she or he helps people learn amidst the mess and confusion of their real lives?

The uncomfortable question of violent action

Social movements are collections of people who engage in action to resist or bring about change. Educators who work in or with social movements, therefore, must confront the issue of action. Newman lists three categories of action on pages 224 to 226 in *Teaching Defiance*.

Reflection

How far would you go? As an activist? As an educator?

Newman finds violence repugnant but believes that we live in a violent world and so we need to address the question of violence. We must not reject violent action in a ‘knee-jerk reaction’. We owe it to ourselves to think about it. On pages 252 and 253 he tells the stories of three people whom he admires and clearly believes are just and good people yet who entertained the idea of violent action.

Reflection

These are difficult and worrying stories. How do you react to them?

In an article published in a recent edition of the British journal *Adults Learning* (NIACE, 2007, Volume 18, No. 7) Newman says:

Of course, as Myles Horton said, no one in her or his right mind would prefer violence to non-violence. Yet we live in violent times. Paradoxically, three governments which espouse the concepts of law and order invaded Iraq and unleashed the horrific disorder which prevails in that country as I write. Avowedly decent, peaceable and law-abiding people can be the instigators of war and so, whether they like the epithet or not, people of violence.

We need to acknowledge the existence of violence, and help ourselves and others arrive at a thoughtful rejection of it. And perhaps Iraq is just the case-study necessary to help ourselves and others clarify how counter-productive violent action can be, even if engaged in for supposedly honourable reasons.

Newman looks for stories that challenge, that hopefully will make his learners think hard.

Task

Think back through his book and choose a story you might be able to use in your own work as an educator. Mark the page references. Think through your own experience and see whether you can find a story to hang some good teaching and learning on.

To complete this session

Newman makes mention of Myles Horton in the passage quoted above. Read the excerpt from Myles Horton's book *The Long Haul*. It is Reading 11.

Preparation for the next session

Read Chapter 19 'Hating and loving' starting page 273, and the Postscript on page 287.

Session 12: The moral educator

In the final chapter of *Teaching Defiance* Newman talks of hate and love. The chapter is the culmination of the final section of the book and of the book as a whole.

Hate

Reflection:

Newman advocates the use of hate as a positive motivating force. Does this surprise you, shock you, please you ...?

Newman compares hate and anger, arguing that both can be controlled rather like using a dimmer switch? Do you think this is the case? Can we really control and make a calculated use of hate?

Newman refers extensively to Hazlitt's essay 'The pleasure of hating'. Can we actually enjoy the experience of hating something or someone?

Newman writes on page 276-277:

We can savour our hate and the imagined actions it might spur us on to. And we can use it to spur us on to real action, but that real action, that 'overt' action, is to be 'kept within the bounds of humanity'.

Reflection:

Is this a reasonable position to take? Can we keep hate 'within the bounds of humanity'?

Love

Reflection:

Newman talks of love and proposes using it to offset hate so that we do not become 'bigoted maniacs'. He talks of love as something we give but also as something we take. Does this hold true?

He talks of love both in terms of abandon and total commitment, and then as an emotion that can be rational. Do these contradictions hold true?

He argues that Bauman paints love as 'a pure, exigent, moral force'. Do you agree? Can hate also be a pure, exigent moral force?

The final paragraph

Reflection

Does Newman effectively reconcile hate and love, these two exigent, moral forces? Does he provide a moral position which educators can both adopt and teach?

The postscript

Reread the Postscript on page 287.

Reflection

What do we as educators, as popular educators, as social movement educators, as activist educators really want to achieve?

To complete this session (and the subject):

Read Tom Heaney's monograph, Reading 12, in the course reader. Heaney is an activist educator working out of National-Louis University, Chicago, USA. The article provides an overview and some ideas to ponder on. (One word of warning: when Heaney talks of 'adult education's formative years beginning in the 1930s', he is talking of the early years of the development of adult education as a field of study in universities. Adult education itself, in the form of adults gathering together to teach and learn together, has been going on for millennia.)

NOTE: These course notes and instructions have been written by Michael Newman. I was asked to write the course, making use of my own book as the set text. It has been an odd experience to refer to myself throughout in the third person, but that seemed the best convention to adopt. All the best.

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Welton, M. 'Social revolutionary learning: The new social movements as learning sites'. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1993, 43(3).

Readings in the Course Reader

- Reading 1: 'Defining popular education' (Chapter 3) by Rick Flowers from 'Informal and popular education in youth and community work'. PhD thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 2005.
- Reading 2: 'Social change education: Context matters' by Kathryn Choules in *Adult Education Quarterly*, 2007, 57(2).
- Reading 3: 'Social movements' (pages 92 to 94) by Tom Nesbit, Linda Leach and Griff Foley from 'Teaching Adults' (Chapter 5) in G. Foley (ed.) *Dimensions of Adult Learning: Adult education and training in a global era*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2004.
- Reading 4: 'Education at the bottom' by David Head in *Studies in Adult Education*, 1977, 9(2).
- Reading 5: 'Workshops' (Chapter 12) by Myles Horton from *The long haul*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- Reading 6: 'The radical opposition' (Chapter 9) by Thomas Kelly from *A history of adult education in Great Britain*, Liverpool University Press, 1970.
- Reading 7: 'Adult learning in new social movements: Environmental protest and the struggle for the Clayoquot Sound rainforest' by Pierre Walter from *Adult Education Quarterly*, 2007, 57(3).
- Reading 8: 'New social movements and their implications for adult education' by Matthias Finger from *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1989, 40(1).
- Reading 9: 'Social revolutionary learning: The new social movements as learning sites' by Michael Welton from *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1993, 43(3).
- Reading 10: 'Why social movements matter: Adult education theory, cognitive praxis and the creation of knowledge' by John Holford from *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1995, 45(2).
- Reading 11: A section (bottom of page 39 to mid 41) by Myles Horton from his *The long haul*, New York, Doubleday
- Reading 12: 'Adult education for social change: From center stage to the wings and back again' by Tom Heaney, *An ERIC Monograph*, 1996.

ASSESSMENT for Popular Education, Social Movements and Activism

Assessment for this subject will involve the satisfactory completion of two assignments.

1. ANNOTATED LOG

The first assignment is an annotated log in which you are asked to keep a record of the readings done, and of the reflection exercises and tasks completed in each session. The log is not a diary or a learning journal but simply a record containing enough information for you and another reader to track your progress through the subject

You will note that throughout the study guide there are reflection exercises and tasks marked out in the text by 'boxes'. There are often several reflection exercises and tasks in a single session. There are also readings set for each session. Following each session you are asked to find time to make a note of the reflection exercises completed, the tasks completed and the reading completed. The log is described as an 'annotated log' because you are also asked to write a note about each reflection exercise, task or reading, recording a reaction or an outcome. This note must in some way make reference to the content of the exercise or task or reading.

For example, in Session 2 there is this reflection exercise:

Reflection

We do not always start a book from the beginning. From the table of contents, which chapter heading attracts you most?

Your entry in the log might be:

Session 2

Fourth reflection exercise: Asked to select chapter heading from the table of contents in the set text that attracted me most. Hesitated between 'Dialogue' and 'Storytelling'. Chose 'Storytelling' and flicked through the chapter. Have always thought stories were a good teaching tool. Look forward to reading and thinking some more about this.

For example, in Session 6 there is this task:

Task:

Newman makes several references to Freire in *Teaching Defiance*. Using the index of *Teaching Defiance*, find and read those references. This may take a while since you may have to read several paragraphs which follow each reference.

Your entry in the log might be:

Session 6

First task: Looked for and read mentions of Freire in the set text, using the index. Found Freire's distinction between true and false words a challenge. Will look out for examples in myself, in the words of others (politicians on TV), and in my reading.

For your readings, log each reading as you complete it and annotate that entry with a sentence or two capturing the essential point or points of the reading. For example, at the end of Chapter 6 there is this instruction:

Preparation for the next session

Read Chapter 15 'Teaching about action' in Teaching Defiance.

Your entry in the log might be:

Read Chapter 15 'Teaching about action' from the set text. Found that this chapter covered a lot of territory, looking at a number of different aspects of action. Liked the story of the music festival and the Shembes' dance but think Newman may have thrown his net a bit too wide in describing Ntuli's intervention as an educational event.

2. RESEARCH PROJECT/ESSAY

The second assessment task will involve researching, describing, analysing and reflecting on a social movement or an example of popular education located within a social movement, or actually planning a popular education campaign. You may choose a campaign or a social movement from the past and research it. You might choose the formation of early trade unions in the early part of the nineteenth century, or the struggle in South Africa against Apartheid, or the Green Bans campaign in Sydney in the 1970s. You might choose a current movement or campaign such as the campaigns surrounding the detention of asylum seekers. You might examine the whole movement or one organization such as Chilout. Or you might choose to plan a campaign. For example you might decide to run a campaign aimed at making people aware of climate change and what they can do about it. This might be a very localised campaign, aimed at the residents of a single neighbourhood, or you may want to plan something on a state or national level.

Whatever the context, your research needs to examine the education within the movement or campaign. If you are researching an actual campaign then you need to identify the educational elements of the movement or campaign, and speculate on how they may have been improved. You will need to describe and analyse the educational elements with reference to educational theory. If you are planning a campaign then you need to build education into the campaign and explain and justify it theoretically.

There is a session in the program set aside to help you get on with your research project/essay. This is well on into the program, and you may want to make a start before

then. If you do, limit yourself to research, and in any event check with the course-coordinator before embarking on any major writing.

The research project/essay will need to meet the following criteria:

- It must be presented neatly and in an accessible way.
- The intention of the project must be set out in an introduction.
- The argument must be clearly presented and be in a coherent order.
- There must be evidence of reading.
- There must be evidence of research.
- There must be evidence of original and critical thinking.
- A standard reference system must be used.
- A conclusion must review and discuss the extent to which the intention has been achieved.