FuturelabAE
change oriented adult education

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What is change-oriented adult education
- and why do we need it?

Seminar on change-oriented adult education 17.2.2021
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#FutureLabAE

Manninen, J., Jetsu, A. & Sgier. I. (2019). Change-oriented adult education in the fields of democracy and digitalization. FutureLabAE Project Intellectual output O1. Brussels: EAEA.

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1

What should adult education do?

1. Help to <u>keep the current situation</u> (status quo) and support adults to adapt and live their current lives?

2. <u>Develop peacefully</u> the society, communities, organizations and individuals?

3. <u>Change</u> – if necessary, in a more radical way – the society, communities, organizations and individuals?

CAN ADULTS LEARN?

Of course, it <u>**should depend**</u> on how "good" the society, community, organization, individual is...

"Good"   → option 1.
"Quite OK"   → option 2.
"Bad"   → option 3.

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2

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POLITICAL OPTIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION (Picon 1991)

'From our historical experience we have learned that the actors involved in adult education do not have a neutral posture. They have <u>ideologies</u> and fundamental <u>interests</u> which they are attempting to legitimize [..] these actors are guided by and support <u>one of the following basic political options</u>:

1. **Maintenance and conservation** of the traditional ordering of the society, however unjust and unequal it may be; *Easy, "automatic"*

2. **Reform to improve the system** and make the necessary adjustments for more equity;
3. **Structural transformation** leading to a new national order, whether by progressive steps or radical changes through revolutionary processes.' *More difficult, require new ways of thinking*

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3

In policy documents education is commonly seen as a <u>reactive</u> tool, helping adults to <u>adapt</u> in changes (option 1):

Existing policy documents

- "… *improve everyone's capacity and ability to* ***cope with life***" (LLL-policy, Estonia)

- "… *an increased burden is imposed on individuals* ***to adapt their skills in order to remain prepared for future changes***" (Council of the European Union (2008). *Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies*)

Alternative: change-oriented policy…

- "… *improve everyone's capacity and ability to change their life - and develop the society*"

- "… *an increased burden is imposed on individuals* ***to develop their skills in order to anticipate and even manage changes and their future***"

➔ **Education** is seen to have a sustaining role in the society, focusing on maintaining status quo and adaptation and survival of individuals in the current system (social control).

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4

4

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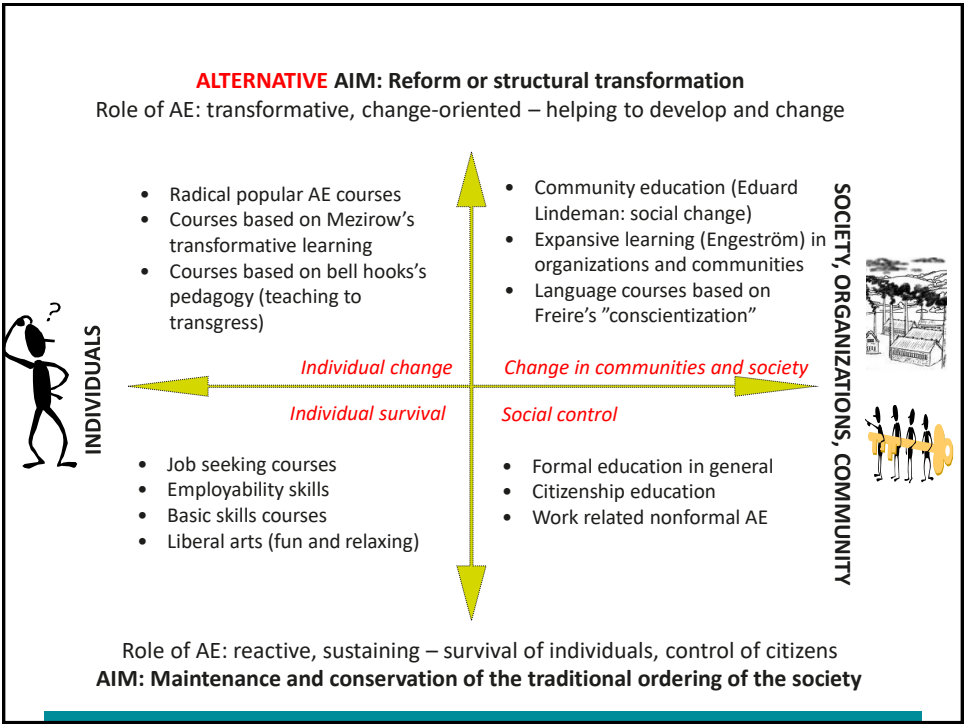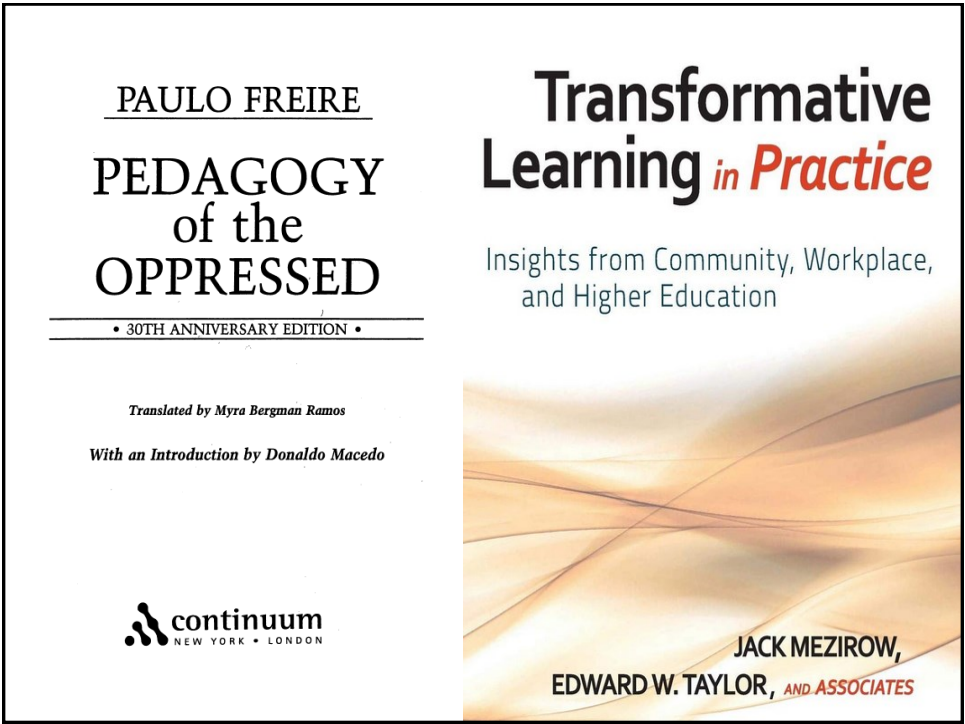http://www.uef.fi/en/web/kapsy

Examples: Alternative options how adult education could be used to develop democracy

1. **Maintenance and conservation** of the traditional ordering of the society
   - Example: courses which **make individuals more active voters** (→ 'justification' for politicians to stay in power)
2. **Reform** to improve the system
   - Example: courses where **adults learn to recognize populistic rhetoric's and fake news,** and act as **more reflective voters** (→ perhaps better politicians selected)
   - Historical example: *Nordic **folkbildning** system since 19th Century (to educate the common people so that they can become active citizens of the democratic, parliamentary system)* → ***Nordic democratic welfare states***
3. **Structural transformation**
   - Example: social movements where adults become **active citizens** and **learn how to contribute to development of more democratic society** ("transformative citizenship"; Banks 2017) (→ undemocratic system changed to more democratic one)
   - Historical example:
     - ***Civil rights movement in the USA*** *in 1950-60's (Highlander Folk High School; Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King);*
   - Current example: ***Belarus*** *civic movement for democratic elections*
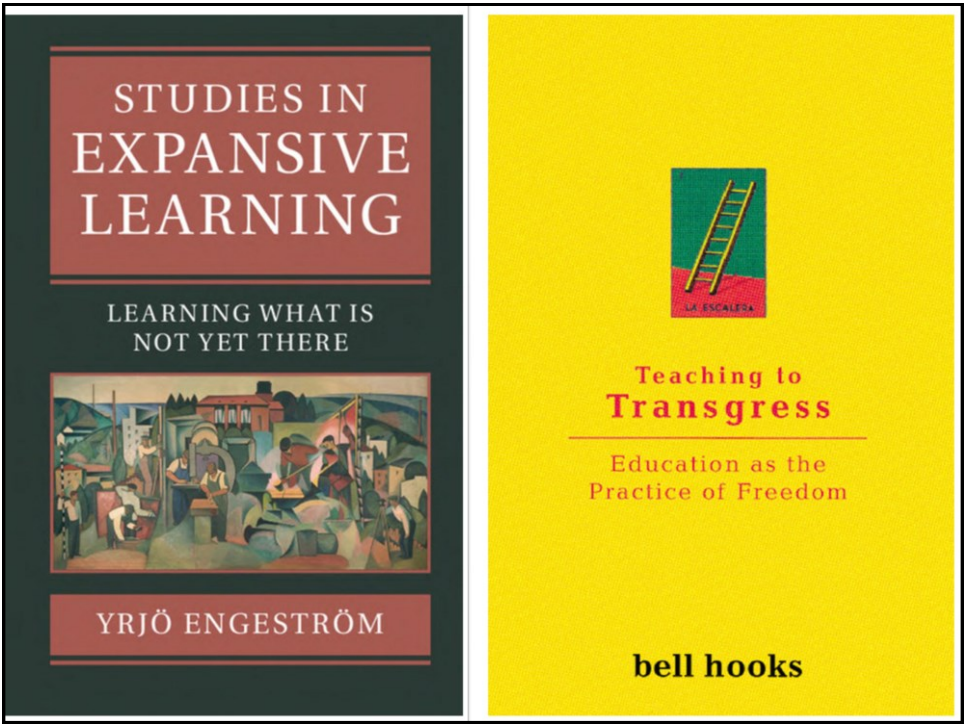
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5

ALTERNATIVE AIM: Reform or structural transformation
Role of AE: transformative, change-oriented – helping to develop and change

INDIVIDUALS

- Radical popular AE courses
- Courses based on Mezirow's transformative learning
- Courses based on bell hooks's pedagogy (teaching to transgress)

- Community education (Eduard Lindeman: social change)
- Expansive learning (Engeström) in organizations and communities
- Language courses based on Freire's "conscientization"

SOCIETY, ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY

Individual change   *Change in communities and society*

Individual survival   *Social control*

- Job seeking courses
- Employability skills
- Basic skills courses
- Liberal arts (fun and relaxing)

- Formal education in general
- Citizenship education
- Work related nonformal AE

Role of AE: reactive, sustaining – survival of individuals, control of citizens
AIM: Maintenance and conservation of the traditional ordering of the society

6

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7

8

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4

Definition of change-oriented adult education

Change-oriented adult education encompasses an approach, philosophy and set of teaching and learning methods that **seek to create individual and/or social change**. Learners can also move beyond **individual transformation** to a **collective empowerment** based on **critical awareness**, new **ways of thinking**, and **active participation**. This model facilitates a process of conscious realization for learners as they work together taking action, including potential acts of resistance, **towards a more democratic**, **equal** and **ethical world**.
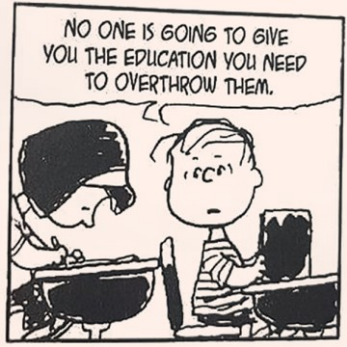
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9

Need to organize change-oriented AE can be based on…

• experienced or observed social problems (here: problems caused by digitalization)

• political systems which are undemocratic (for example, USA in 1950's) or open to dangers of populism (Brexit?)

• poverty, austerity policies, economic and gender inequalities

• destructive ways of behaving and thinking (hate speech, lack of media literacy skills, climate change denial, conspiracy theories..)

• or on political objectives; not necessarily "good"
– for example, the "civic education program" in Nazi Germany

A fundamental question is, **how and by whom** the need for change (peaceful or radical) is defined.

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10

Organized by whom?

- The "ruling" groups and people are not likely to promote radical changes through education, and focus therefore mainly on
  - Option 1 (general education, training for jobs, basic civic education, "transmission of culture")
  - Option 2 (peaceful development of individuals, organization or society)

- Option 3 is **organized mainly outside the official education system** and often organized by individuals themselves
  - "renewal from the margins", "do-it-yourself learning spaces" (Kirchgaesser 2019b)

NO ONE IS GOING TO GIVE YOU THE EDUCATION YOU NEED TO OVERTHROW THEM.

EDUCACIÓN POPULAR

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11

Require learning and teaching methods which…

- Facilitate dialogue between people who have different world views, and critical reflection

→ Helps to become aware of own and other people's attitudes, beliefs, values, and (meaning) perspectives

→ Challenge the existing conceptions and attitudes

→ Help seeing things in alternative ways

→ Encourage to do things differently

→ Lead to concrete action and shared responsibility
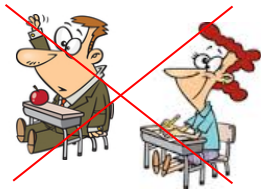
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12

Examples of "change-oriented" learning methods

- **Serious games** (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey & Boyle 2012)
- **Social sculpture** (https://www.artistsofsociety.com)
- **Fishbowl** (a collaborative, dialogical alternative for panels; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishbowl_(conversation)
- **Photovoice** (Akther & Dirckinck-Holmfeld 2018)
- **Participatory action research** (PAR; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013)
- **Liberative walks** (Raisio & Ehrström 2017)
- **Change laboratory** (Sannino & Engeström 2017)
- Teaching methods that can be applied to develop *transformative citizenship skills* (Banks 2017, 372 – 374)
  - Culturally Responsive and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
  - Civic Action Programs (participatory action research, service learning etc)
- See also this toolbox: https://www.collaboratiohelvetica.ch/toolbox

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13

Thank you!   Any questions, thoughts, comments…?

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14

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