CHAPTER 3

Identifying Your Philosophical Orientation

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In the process of planning, conducting, and evaluating educational activities, adult educators have both the opportunity and the responsibility to make a number of decisions. Adult education is, to a great extent, minimally regulated in terms of what will be taught and what teaching methods will be used. Individual teachers often determine the content and scope of what they will teach, then choose methods or strategies and instructional materials they believe will best help the learner gain new knowledge, acquire a new skill, or change an attitude or behavior. Thus, adult educators often have the freedom, as well as the responsibility, to help set learner expectations, determine the purpose and outcomes of the learning activity, and conduct and evaluate the teaching/learning experience as they deem appropriate.

In the late 1960s, while working in an adult basic education program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity, I began to be concerned about how educational and programmatic decisions were made. It seemed as if the primary influences were factors such as the availability, affordability, and attractiveness of instructional materials; the popularity of a particular teaching strategy (e.g., behavioral objectives) or a teaching device (e.g., a speed reading machine); or the stated objectives of a funding agency (e.g., citizenship education for immigrants). Since all of these elements were undergoing change, sometimes rapidly, I questioned whether there might not be something deeper than that, some set of values or beliefs which I might hold personally that might serve as a guide.
THE IMPORTANCE OF A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

On what basis are decisions made and actions taken in the field of adult education? On what basis should they be done? Of what value might it be to the adult educator to go through a systematic process of exploring the basis for educational decisions and actions? If there are minimal guidelines or mandates, or if these keep changing, is there any primary factor that may be relied upon as a consistent basis for making choices in the practice of adult education?

There is evidence from a number of disciplines to suggest some positive relationship between an individual's beliefs, values, or attitudes and the decisions and actions that make up one's daily life. Psychological theories, though they differ, often draw a correlation between beliefs, values and/or attitudes, and human behavior. On the basis of such theories, certain forms of treatment or therapy are proposed to help individuals change undesirable, ineffective, and counterproductive behaviors through a process that involves examining, clarifying, and perhaps changing what one believes.

In an attempt to make sense out of the world, people formulate beliefs upon which they can rely as guides for the future. Individual beliefs generally fit into groups or categories with other similar beliefs, forming belief systems which, as a whole, comprise a life philosophy. Generally, adults have formulated some life philosophy which underlies their interpretation of the world and their actions within it. However, the life philosophy is often unrecognized and rarely expressed, though it may be understood implicitly. Goals may not be verbalized, direction is often unclear, and actions frequently are inconsistent with beliefs and values. A life philosophy is rarely static or inflexible; beliefs change to accommodate new needs and experiences. Yet, a person's philosophy of life does provide a framework by which to live and act.

RELATIONSHIP OF PHILOSOPHY TO EDUCATION

When the adult educator engages in the practice of education, certain beliefs about life in general are applied to the practice. These beliefs constitute the basis for a philosophy of education. As with the life philosophy, the philosophy of education may be unrecog-
nized, internally inconsistent, and only partially formulated. However, beliefs about education do provide some basis for selecting instructional content, establishing teaching/learning objectives, selecting and/or developing instructional materials, interacting with learners, and evaluating educational outcomes. In developing educational programs, deChambeau (1977) suggests that "the question of 'why' must precede questions of 'what' or 'how'" (p. 308).

Education has as a central focus an intent to effect change—whether that change be an increase in knowledge, the acquisition or improvement of a skill, or a change in attitude or behavior. The direction of change is based to a great extent on what individuals and the larger society believe should happen through education. Early citizenship classes, for example, were designed to "Americanize" immigrants, to acculturate them so they could better fit into American society. The black studies classes that emerged in the late 1960s were designed to instill and reinforce ethnic pride. Maria Montessori's teaching system was intended to encourage individual growth, rather than to socialize children. "Back to the basics" movements in schools reflect a belief that the foundation of a good education includes a solid grounding in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The "behaviorist" approach to instruction was a direct result of Skinnerian theory regarding stimulus-response patterns; whereas Paulo Freire's "conscientización" clearly reflect its creator's belief that the primary purpose of adult education is to awaken critical consciousness that can be directed toward social change. To a greater or lesser extent, in more or less obvious ways, purposes and methods of education emerge from individual and/or shared perceptions of how things are and how they should be.

The role(s) of the adult educator may include transmitting information through a lecture, demonstrating new skills, assisting the learner in planning learning activities, facilitating a discovery learning process, directing the learner to other resources, leading the learner through a series of trial-and-error experiences, and a number of other possible ways of facilitating learning. In all of these cases, adult educators make decisions and act according to what they believe to be appropriate. Even if an educational institution dictates or regulates certain aspects of the teaching process, the individual educator may support, modify, reject, or conform to such mandates, based on personal beliefs and interpretations.

Since people enter the field of adult education with widely
varied backgrounds, there is also the likelihood that they will hold varied beliefs about how to teach, what to teach, and why adults are there to learn. With the proliferation of educational opportunities for adults and the increasing number of adults who will be engaging in educational activities, there will be a greater number of people who have some role in teaching them.

Adult educators are constantly faced with answering the questions, “What should I do?” and “How should I do it?”; “How can I accomplish X?” and “How can I change X to Y?” Answers to these questions can be sought in rational thought and educational theory; but other strategies are often used, such as acting on the basis of habit or following the latest trend. Unfortunately, these strategies (or lack of strategy) often lead to incongruence and inconsistency in actions. Elias and Merriam (1980) believe that “Theory without practice leads to an empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to mindless activism” (p. 4).

PERSONAL VALUES AS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Rokeach (1968) and others clearly relate values to social psychology and the ways people act within society. People hold values regarding modes of conduct or “end-states of existence” which they consider personally and socially preferable to other modes of conduct and end-states of existence. “Once a value is internalized, it becomes, consciously or unconsciously, a standard or criterion for guiding action . . .” (p. 16). People are prompted to examine and perhaps change their values when they perceive inconsistencies within their total value system or between their values and their behavior. Changes in values would conceivably result in different modes of conduct or ways of acting in society.

A basic assumption underlying the teaching/learning process is that the purpose of education is to promote, guide, and/or facilitate some sort of change in individuals (Zinn, 1975). The adult educator is consistently and intentionally intervening in the lives of other adults. The changes which the adult educator is at least partially responsible for effecting in the learner “may hurt humans or evoke in them the truly beautiful and good” (White, 1970, p. 121).
The adult educator, acting in the role of change agent, often faces the dilemma of conflicting values.

The role of personal values in social change was noted by Warren (1971), who asserted that individuals orient themselves primarily toward one of two values—"truth" or "love"—when thinking of social change. However, "most of us carry both orientations around with us, applying them in different admixtures in this case or that . . . " (p. 273), resulting in an internal dilemma and external inconsistencies. People who attempt to promote social change are, thus, confused about what they are trying to do. "They seem to think it possible both to help people do what they themselves want to do (i.e., a 'love'/process orientation) and at the same time ensure that specific goals are met (i.e., a 'truth'/task orientation) . . . " (p. 290).

WHAT WE SAY WE BELIEVE VERSUS WHAT WE DO

As adult educators begin to examine their own beliefs in relation to the practice of education, a word of caution is in order. There are frequently discrepancies between what people say they believe and what they actually do. Argyris and Schon (1974), working in the field of organizational development, looked for reasons why people have difficulty learning and adopting new theories of action. They suggested that this difficulty may represent conflicts with existing theories people have that already determine their practice. They called these operational theories of action "theories-in-use" to distinguish them from the "espoused theories" that are used to describe and justify behavior, and they questioned whether the difficulty in learning new theories of action is related to a disposition to protect the old theories-in-use.

When we are asked how we would behave under certain circumstances, the answer we usually give is an espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which we give allegiance and which, upon request, we communicate to others. However, the theory that actually governs our actions is the theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with our espoused theory; furthermore, we may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two (or more) theories.

Theories-in-use, however their assumptions may differ, in-
clude assumptions about self, others, the situation, and the connections among action, consequence, and situation. Lack of congruence between espoused theory and theory-in-use may precipitate a search for a modification of either theory, since people tend to value both espoused theory (image of self) and congruence (integration of doing and believing). An awareness of discrepancies between espoused theories (or values, beliefs, philosophy) and theories-in-use (or beliefs, values, philosophy as evidenced by behavior) may prompt an examination of both what one says one values, and what one actually does.

BENEFITS OF CLARIFYING ONE'S PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

In every phase of life, people believe certain things about the activities they perform. The act of "philosophizing" is an attempt to express such beliefs, whether for one's own clarification or to communicate more clearly with others. We all "philosophize" when we try to express the things we believe about our lives and about our relations to the rest of life. "A myth seems to exist among practitioners of many service-oriented fields that philosophy is the exclusive domain of a few select academicians. However, the application (of philosophical thought) to real-life situations depends on how willing practitioners are to reflect on why they do what they do" (White & Brockett, 1987, p. 11).

The clarification of one's personal philosophy of education may have the following benefits:

1. Provide an integrated, consistent basis for making judgments and decisions (Stewart, 1973).

2. Help separate what is worthwhile from what is trivial (Maxcy, 1980).


4. Expand vision; enhance personal meaning in the individual adult educator's life (Apps, 1973).

5. Assist in recognizing and resolving conflicts (a) within total life philosophy and (b) between beliefs and actions (Phenix, 1958).
6. Provide insight into relationships (a) between teacher and learner, (b) between learner and subject matter, and (c) between subject matter and the world at large (Maxcy, 1980).

7. Clarify how the adult educator’s work relates to important problems of individuals and society (Apps, 1973).

8. Help the adult educator ask better questions and answer questions better, about educational programming (Apps, 1973).

9. Help the individual understand self in relation to vocation and employment, to resolve conflicts, to become self-directed, and to take leadership (Apps, 1973).

**Continuing and Extension Education**

Apps has suggested that continuing education practitioners may benefit from philosophical analysis in five major ways:

It can help us to become critically aware of what we do as practitioners; show us alternative approaches to program planning, teaching, budgeting, and so on; help us to become aware of how values, ethics, and esthetics can be applied to continuing education practice; illustrate to us the importance of our personal histories and how they influence what we do as educators; and free us from dependence on someone else’s doctrine (Apps, 1985, p. 16).

Questions posed by Apps to guide in the development of a working adult education philosophy may be adapted to Extension education as follows: “What is human nature? What is the mission of Extension practice? What value does Extension have in our society? What is my role as an Extension professional?” (White & Brockett, 1987, p. 12). Philosophies which represent the field of adult education (Elias & Merriam, 1980) also have relevance to Extension programs and practice. White and Brockett suggested programmatic applications of these philosophical orientations (see Figure 3.1).

**Business and Industry Training**

The essential function of a trainer in business and industry is one of adult education, i.e., “increasing the skills and knowledge of other workers so they can be more productive and efficient on the job” (Roth, 1987, p. 59). The trainer, as an adult educator, can
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Application to Extension Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Probably the most enduring of the major educational philosophies; stresses development of intellectual power of the mind. Emphasizes content mastery with the educator viewed as expert/authority.</td>
<td>Educational effort in pesticide education with agriculture specialist providing instruction via lecture with a test following presentation of material; content mastery is essential due to mandatory testing for licensing of pesticide applicators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Developed out of the ideas of John Dewey; stresses an experiential, problem-solving approach to learning. Emphasizes experience of learner in determining problem areas and solution to be considered.</td>
<td>Human resource specialist in interior design and household equipment designs an instructional approach directed toward household maintenance via a problem-solving process; participants identify, by experience, problems in home care and them determine appropriate procedure based on alternative suggested by the specialists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviorist</td>
<td>Emphasizes importance of the environment in shaping desired behavior. Behaviorism has contributed to the development of systematic instructional design models and emphasizes accountability.</td>
<td>Family economics specialist provides home study course in estate planning involving a systematic (step-by-step) approach to determining accountable end results; specialist serves as facilitator while participants take initiative to complete process and evaluate each step before proceeding to next step.</td>
</tr>
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Humanist: Based on the assumption that human nature is essentially positive and that each person possesses virtually unlimited potential; places emphasis on personal growth and self-direction in the learning process.

Radical: Stresses the role of education as a means of bringing about major social change; education is used to combat social, political, and economic oppression within society.

Family development specialist designs instruction relevant to economic stress with emphasis on self-concept and self-esteem (worth of the individual). Small group workshops, seminars, and forums used to enhance "participatory" approach resulting in a positive feeling by individuals. Specialist serves as facilitator of the learning process.

Public affairs specialist designs instruction relevant to public issues such as water policy. Forums, self-instructional packages, and other techniques are used to increase awareness of specific issues and, in turn, provide opportunity for possible community change.

Figure 3.1 Adult education philosophy applied to extension practice.

benefit from developing a personal philosophy of training, "a set of beliefs that guide the trainer and the training department ... the heart of a training program ... the foundation for decisions that can expand or improve training efforts" (p. 60).

Roth suggests two interrelated ways for the individual trainer to develop a personal philosophy of training. First, he presents a set of theorems proposed in the early 1900s by the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, concerning standards for technical education. These ten concepts can be catalysts for developing a training philosophy. In addition, Roth poses a number of questions to guide the trainer in the development of a training philosophy. For example, "Should your training programs be accessible to all employees who want and can benefit from them? Should you develop training programs that can be adapted to the individual learning styles of the trainees? Should the goals and objectives of the training department reflect the broad purposes and mission of the company?" Answers to these and related questions may help the trainer to formulate the broad set of beliefs on which to develop a training philosophy. "Unless you can systematically identify what you value in a training program," suggests Roth, "you will never be able to justify the purpose for your training efforts" (p. 61).

IDENTIFYING A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION

Elias and Merriam (1980) provided a comprehensive overview of prevailing philosophies of adult education, which they categorized as follows: Liberal Adult Education, Progressive Adult Education, Behaviorist Adult Education, Humanistic Adult Education, Radical Adult Education, and Analytic Philosophy of Adult Education. They concluded their extensive discussion of these philosophies with a crucial question, "What stance should the adult educator adopt as his or her personal philosophy of adult education?" (p. 203).

Three alternate approaches are proposed. The first option is to choose one of the philosophies, or to determine that one has already espoused, perhaps implicitly, one of the theories discussed
in their book. A second option is to formulate one’s philosophy of adult education in an eclectic manner, choosing certain elements from different (though hopefully not conflicting) theories and operating according to those principles. A third option is to choose one particular theory as a framework upon which to build a personal educational philosophy. Within this structure, views from other theories can be incorporated that are not inconsistent with the basic position.

Developing a Working Philosophy

Apps was one of the earliest proponents of the development of a personal philosophy by adult educators. In his 1973 monograph, he presented a rationale and proposed general guidelines for the adult educator to use to develop a personal “working philosophy of adult education.” He stressed the importance of seeking answers to questions using a philosophic, as well as a scientific approach. Although educational decisions are often made on the basis of experience and common sense, Apps stressed that there is a need for a more systematic working philosophy, a method of looking at broad educational problems from a philosophic point of view.

Apps provided more specific guidelines for developing a framework for an educational philosophy. He proposed that the adult educator make a systematic analysis of his or her present “working philosophy” and then build on it where necessary. Using this approach, ideas from other general and educational philosophies would be incorporated into the working philosophy until they have been carefully analyzed.

In support of this approach, Apps quoted Eduard Lindeman (1926/1961, p. xxvii):

Each of us must be allowed to possess two or three philosophies at the same time, for the purpose . . . of saving our thought from the deadly formality of consistency. No one can write about education, particularly adult education, without despairing at various points all schools of pedagogy, psychology and philosophy. Incongruities are obvious; one cannot, for example, be a determinist and at the same time advocate education; nor can idealism be made to fit the actualities of life without recognition of the material limitations which surround living organism. One cannot, that is, make use of these opposed points of view if they are conceived to be mutually exclusive.
Apps offered a framework that would enable adult educators to identify and state their beliefs related to adult education in a systematic way. First, he suggested that beliefs be identified in four categories:

1. *The Learner.* To develop one's working philosophy of adult education, it is essential that beliefs about the learner be carefully analyzed, and if necessary, developed. Ultimately, no matter what kind of adult education we are involved with, our concern is for the adult learner. What then do we believe about the adult learner?

2. *Overall Purpose of Adult Education.* What do we believe are the goals and the objectives of adult education? What is adult education trying to accomplish and why? Is it necessary that adult education have overall purposes?

3. *Content or Subject Matter.* What is to be learned? What are the sources of content? What do we believe about the role of content in adult education?

4. *Learning Process.* What do we believe about how adults learn? About providing opportunities for learning? About the role of instructional objectives in adult education? (pp. 11-12)

In a later work (1976), he added a fifth category: beliefs about the role of the adult educator. As a starting point for developing one's own adult education philosophy, he suggested a belief analysis process consisting of four phases:

1. Identifying beliefs held about adult education, by asking oneself the questions posed above, as well as other relevant questions in each of the five categories

2. Searching for contradictions among beliefs held

3. Discovering bases for beliefs, including sources of beliefs and evidence that supports beliefs

4. Making judgments about bases for the particular beliefs held
The process of analyzing one's philosophy, and subsequent synthesis which takes into account new and changing beliefs, is comprehensive and perhaps more complex and lengthy than most educators are willing to tolerate. However, it can certainly result in a comprehensive and consistent working philosophy.

A Values Clarification Approach

Another alternative to formulating a personal philosophy of education incorporates the values clarification process, which became popular in the 1960s. Paterson (1964) suggested that “adult educational values are, in fact, nothing but our religious, moral, social, and other general values restated within the adult educational setting” (p. 48). If this is so, a process of systematically clarifying one's values may well lead to the clarification of one's personal beliefs about education, i.e., a personal philosophy of adult education. Proponents of values clarification believe that the process of clarifying values, especially as those values relate to certain activities or practices, is likely to reduce confusion, increase clarity and direction, and lead to more consistent behavior and decision making.

Major proponents of values clarification (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1966) have focused on the “process of valuing” rather than attempting to identify specific values. The method for clarifying values proposed by Raths et al. begins with the following list of criteria which indicate that something is indeed valued (p. 221):

PRIZING one’s beliefs and behaviors
1. Prizing and cherishing
2. Publicly affirming, when appropriate

CHOOSING one’s beliefs and behaviors
3. Choosing from alternatives
4. Choosing after consideration of consequences
5. Choosing freely
ACTING on one's beliefs

6. Acting

7. Acting with a pattern, consistency, and repetition.

Then, in a systematic manner, these criteria are applied to specific situations in which values are unclear and perhaps inconsistent. For example, a case study might be examined which presents educators with a dilemma and requires them to make a decision. In the process of making that decision, values stated and/or implied by the educators are examined against the valuing criteria. The educators might be asked to give examples of how they would give evidence of prizng, choosing, and acting on their beliefs. There are numerous values clarification techniques that might be used in this process (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972). However, the values clarification process does not, in itself, result in a comprehensive statement of interrelated beliefs. Further steps would have to be taken to fit the clarified values into a broader framework or philosophical orientation.

PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION INVENTORY

When I entered a graduate program in adult education and was asked to state my personal educational philosophy, I was stuck with a blank piece of paper. Even when I had succeeded in writing something about what I (thought I) believed and valued, it seemed rather esoteric and theoretical, somehow not connected to the reality of what I do as an adult educator.

A few years later, while enrolled in a doctoral program, I began to look for a practical and effective way to help adult educators identify their personal philosophical orientation related to adult education. As a result, a measurement instrument was developed and validated that could be used by an adult educator to identify a personal philosophy of adult education and compare it with prevailing philosophies of the field of adult education (Zinn, 1983).

The Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) © is designed to help you, as an adult educator, to begin a process of philosophical inquiry and reflection on your beliefs and actions.
The PAEI is reprinted in Appendix A at the end of this chapter. It is self-administered and self-scored, and guidelines are provided for interpreting your scores. You may want to take about 20 minutes to complete and score the PAEI before continuing with the rest of this chapter.

**Interpreting Your Results**

What did you discover? Were you surprised? Or did the results confirm what you have generally believed to be your philosophical orientation? Do you recognize the various teaching methods, buzz words, and names associated with your primary philosophical orientation? Perhaps there are some new things to think about that will help your teaching and decision making in adult education to be more consistent with your beliefs and values.

Most respondents have either a clear primary philosophical orientation, or share two that are more prevalent than others. Typical combinations are Liberal and Behaviorist or Progressive and Humanistic. Some people interpret Radical Adult Education to be an extension and modification (or maybe an extreme form) of Humanistic Adult Education; thus, they might have high scores in both of these. It is highly unlikely that you would have high scores in both the Liberal and Radical categories. It is important to note that the terms “Liberal” and “Radical” should not necessarily be interpreted in a political sense. Instead of “Liberal,” you may want to substitute “Classical” or “Tradition.” “Radical” is used here to mean getting at the basis of something; an alternative term might be “Reconstructionist.” If you find your scores fairly equal among all of the philosophies, or spread among three or more, you may need to work on clarifying your beliefs and looking for contradictions among them.

**Next Steps**

Once you have determined how your personal philosophical orientation compares with others in the field of adult education, you may want to formulate a more comprehensive statement of your adult education philosophy. You might start by listing the actual statements which you rated as 1 in each of the fifteen items on the PAEI. Then, you could rearrange them into categories such as those proposed by Apps (i.e., beliefs about the learner, the pur-
pose of adult education, content or subject matter, the learning process, and the role of the adult educator). Finally, you might elaborate on a few areas that do not seem to be covered by the items on the inventory. A note of caution: Be aware of contradictions in your statements of belief. Although it is not unusual that you might hold conflicting beliefs, examine your narrative belief statements to determine that they do not contradict the beliefs represented by your responses on the PAEI.

In order to get a more objective measure of the congruence between your beliefs and actions, you may want to arrange for a co-worker or supervisor to observe your teaching (and other activities you do as an adult educator) and help you make comparisons between their perceptions of how you behave or act and your stated beliefs.

It would be interesting to retake the PAEI from time to time, to notice whether there are changes in your philosophical orientation, and to reflect on the bases and consequences of such changes. You may find, for example, that when you move into a work setting, your philosophical orientation either conflicts with the new program or institution; or that it is supported in your new situation so that you feel more comfortable; or even that your philosophical orientation may change gradually as a result of exposure to different values and beliefs and different roles as an adult educator.

**Practical Application of the PAEI Results**

A recent study (McKenzie, 1985) which compared responses of twenty-two trainers in business and industry, forty-eight religious educators of adults, and thirty-two beginning graduate students in adult education sought to determine empirically whether a relationship existed between the philosophical orientations of adult educators and their experiences as educators in different adult education contexts. McKenzie did note some interesting differences that seemed to be related to the different contexts in which the respondents functioned as adult educators. He also observed that “many adult educators merely accept patterns of practice (and corresponding theoretical assumptions) without testing these patterns critically. It is not altogether uncommon for some adult educators to be enthusiastic about techniques, procedures, instructional aids, and fads while at the same time avoiding a critical examination of the philosophical grounds of practice” (p. 20).

You may want to use the PAEI with a group of co-workers.
Staff and team members of adult education programs have used the PAEI to identify and clarify their own beliefs regarding adult education, which has resulted in better understanding and communication, improved working relationships among co-workers, more effective planning and decision making, and a better fit between the adult educator's purposes and the needs of the adult learner.

PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION AND TEACHING/TRAINING STYLE

Increasing attention has been paid in recent years to teaching style, which may be defined as the operational behavior of the teacher's educational philosophy. A recent study revealed that teaching style makes a significant difference in student achievement (Conti & Welborn, 1986). They stressed the importance of teachers thoroughly analyzing their teaching behaviors and the consequences of their actions. In particular, it is important to practice a teaching style which consistently treats adults with dignity and respect.

The Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory is partially based on an earlier assessment instrument, the Training Style Inventory (Brostrom, 1979), designed as a tool to assist individuals who work in a training capacity to clarify their individual training style or orientation. The Training Style Inventory offers the trainer examples of choices that might be made in the process of planning, conducting, and evaluating training activities. The combined responses to the inventory result in a profile of the trainer, indicating the extent to which that person approaches training from a Humanist, Behaviorist, Functionalist, and/or Structuralist orientation.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY?

How comfortable are you with "going against the grain" of American mainstream values? Podeschi (1986) identified a number of mainstream American values and categorized them under four of the philosophies identified by Elias and Merriam (1980): Liberal, Behaviorist, Humanistic, and Radical. He noted that the two philosophies which most strongly represent mainstream values are Behaviorist and Humanistic, which embody values such as progress,
change, optimism, individualism, self-reliance, practicality, productivity, technology, and measurability.

In contrast, Liberal adult education is historically associated with the "elites," as well as with a population without much mainstream power: women. Values such as progress, change, newness, optimism, activity, practicality, efficiency, measurability, and technology are not represented in the Liberal education tradition. Radical adult education also runs against the current of American value patterns. "Pushing for political consciousness and social action, radical philosophy emphasizes knowledge as power and a partnership between teachers and students. This political thrust wants more than the mainstream belief in 'equality of opportunity'; they want an 'equality of societal conditions'" (Podeschi, 1986, p. 5). If you find that your personal orientation tends more toward those philosophies which are less representative of mainstream values, you may experience greater conflicts and dilemmas than those individuals whose philosophies are more in tune with current American values.

There is nothing wrong with varying philosophies underlying the field of adult education. Podeschi suggests that, "In its fervor for identity and unity, adult education needs a reminder that pluralism in a field is valuable and that philosophical differences should not be neglected. This does not mean that it is wrong to synthesize various ideas into a working philosophy. But uncritical acceptance of methodologies is not the way out of genuine complexity" (p. 27).

Sometimes it is difficult to take time out from "doing" adult education, in order to think about why you do what you do. However, a little effort in this direction from time to time can reap valuable benefits. Philosophizing about adult education will probably not make a philosopher out of you, but it might help you to be a better adult educator.

REFERENCES

Publications in Continuing Education and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education.


APPENDIX A

PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION INVENTORY

Lorraine M. Zinn, Ph.D.
The Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory© is designed to assist the adult educator to identify his/her personal philosophy of education and to compare it with prevailing philosophies in the field of adult education. The PAEI © is self-administered, self-scored and self-interpreted.

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