

Popular Education Main Ideas



Popular education is a philosophy and methodology of teaching and community organizing. It has many sources and has been used all over the world.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian, is the person best known for his contribution to popular education. He developed his methods while doing literacy work with farmers in rural Brazil in the 1950's and 1960's.

Myles Horton is the person best known from the U.S. for his contributions to popular education. He brought together coal miners, farmers, and laborers in Appalachia to do community education and organizing. He started the Highlander Folk School in rural Tennessee, which became a training center for the Civil Rights Movement.

The goals of popular education are the creation of a truly democratic society where we all have equal access to the world's resources. Human liberation, both personal and collective.

How does popular education propose to achieve its goals?

- Help each person come to believe that they are capable of changing their world.
- Connect people's personal problems to national and global realities (develop critical consciousness).
- Motivate people to organize collectively and take action to resolve their common problems.

The knowledge we gain through life experience is as important as the knowledge we gain through formal education.

People should be active participants in their own learning process. Participation will look differently for each person.

Knowledge is created and shared in the interaction between people.

In each situation in which we try to teach or organize, the conditions should reflect the conditions of the society we are trying to construct. This means equality between “teacher” and “student,” and democratic decision-making.

The arts (music, drama, visual arts, etc.) are important tools for teaching and organizing.

The purpose of developing a critical consciousness is to be able to take action to change the world. (Critical thinking alone is not enough.) The goal of popular education is organized action to change the world.

Some of the values of popular education:

- Love for the cause of the people
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Dedication
- Responsibility
- Solidarity
- Humility
- Comradeship/*Compañerismo*

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