

Journal of Management Education

<http://jme.sagepub.com>

Exploring the Connections between Adult and Management Education

Stephen D. Brookfield, Thomas Kalliath and Marilyn Laiken
Journal of Management Education 2006; 30; 828
DOI: 10.1177/1052562906287970

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://jme.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/30/6/828>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[OBTS Teaching Society for Management Educators](#)

Additional services and information for *Journal of Management Education* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jme.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jme.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://jme.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/30/6/828>

EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ADULT AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Stephen D. Brookfield
University of St. Thomas

Thomas Kalliath
Australian National University

Marilyn Laiken
*Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto*

Stephen Brookfield has written and edited 10 books on adult learning, teaching, and critical thinking. He is a recipient of a number of awards, including the World Award for Literature in Adult Education (in 1986, 1989, 1996, and 2005), the Imogene Okes Award for Outstanding Research in Adult Education (in 1986), and the Leadership Award from the Association for Continuing Higher Education (in 2001). In this interview, Stephen Brookfield responds to questions from Thomas Kalliath and Marilyn Laiken on a range of topics, including connections between adult education and management education, lifelong learning, team learning, organizational and workplace learning, and corporate social responsibility.¹

Keywords: *adult education; management education; lifelong learning; workplace learning*

Tom: Some commentators have argued that there is no meeting point between adult education and management education, given their presumed ideological polarities—do you agree?

Authors' Note: Please address correspondence to Stephen D. Brookfield, Mail # MOH 217, School of Education, University of St. Thomas, 1000 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403-2009; e-mail: sdbrookfield@stthomas.edu

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION, Vol. 30 No. 6, December 2006 828-839
DOI: 10.1177/1052562906287970
© 2006 Organizational Behavior Teaching Society

Stephen: I would like to say that to some adult educators the term *management education* is somewhat problematic. Many of my colleagues are suspicious of the very term because of the patriarchal associations of MAN-agement. When it comes to looking at management education as a field of practice, many adult educators who have come up through the field of community adult education, or who see themselves as part of a broader social movement for democracy, tend to have a knee-jerk suspicion of the field. For them, management as a term has all kinds of Taylor-esque connotations, whereby people are trained and developed to manage other people to achieve maximum productivity. From this perspective, the ends of management are to secure ideological conformity; that is, to ensure that people unquestioningly accept the tenets of capitalist ideology—that the free market functions to the ultimate benefit of all, that competition is an untrammelled good, that ultimate, long-term success is measured by the size of the profit margin, and so on. Recent critiques by adult educators such as Baptiste (2001), Howell, Carter, and Schied (2002), Mojab and Gorman (2003), and Fenwick (2004) argue that corporations, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other kinds of nonprofit organizations that use management education, do so to maximize profits and productivity and/or to retain ideological control. My own work on critical theory (Brookfield, 2005b) explores this perspective. If you conceive of management education this way, you query whether there is any connection between adult education and management education at all, given that adult education has, at its core, the fostering of democratic values and practices, and contains an implicit critique of capitalism and organizational control.

Marilyn: Now that you have explicated the differences, do you think that there are areas where meaningful conversation can take place between the two fields?

Stephen: I think that the possibility of a meaningful conversation between the two fields clearly exists. Given that adults are the learners who are the focus of management education, and given that programs of management education often happen in the same colleges and universities where adult education programs are in place, there is clearly the possibility of insights from each field informing the other. Anyway, my personal belief is that, as an adult educator, you grab any opportunity to work whenever any kind of opening presents itself. When I'm invited into a community or organization to work, I usually find that control is a lot less total than those at the top might like to think, and that there are always little chinks or fissures in the monolithic wall of control or indoctrination that we can chip away at. Even if the honeymoon period between you and the organization is brief, there are structural changes you can lay during that period that have long-term effects. I think, too, that it's all too easy as an adult educator to work only in settings that are perceived as congenial and familiar. Being faced with the challenge of applying adult educational ideas and practices in different contexts such as management education—even if you feel that these contexts don't seem open to adult educational analyses—is wonderfully challenging. It keeps you alert, on your toes.

Most important of all, perhaps, there are many people working within management education who are all too aware of its capitalistic and controlling tendencies, and who are determined to combat these. Just because you're called a "management educator" doesn't mean you're Satan—hopelessly compromised or beyond the pale. Many people in the field are trying to sneak in the same critical and democratic ideas and practices that adult educators support. In fact, sometimes I find that people working in management education, and

allied fields such as human resource development or organization development, are actually staying truer to adult education principles, as I understand them, than are some adult educators! Because the challenges and obstacles to working adults educationally within corporations are often greater than those in other community or educational settings, corporate-based practitioners have to be very creative and nimble. So I find it a little irritating when some of my adult educational colleagues assume that anyone working within corporations or NGOs are ideologically brainwashed slaves of Mammon who are unable to see how those organizations contribute to spiritual malnourishment, environmental pollution, and the maintenance of class, racial, and gender biases. When I've consulted with corporate, nonprofit, even military organizations, I've sometimes found that practices that I had regarded as daringly innovative, the height of creativity, are perceived by members of those organizations as normal and unremarkable, as the lingua franca of organizational practice.

Tom: It is interesting to note that within each field there are people who hold fairly contrasting views. To what extent is our ignorance of these varying positions serving to widen the gulf between our fields?

Stephen: Some adult educators who hold management education at arm's length would probably be staggered to learn that a field of critical management studies exists (Alvesson & Wilmott, 1992, 1996), that it holds its own conferences, and that it is generating a provocative stream of literature (Pas, 2003; Perriton & Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds, 1998; Watson, 2001). If they had known of this, it might have avoided what happened a few years ago, when some North American adult educators working in corporate and other human resource development (HRD) settings found the annual adult education conference atmosphere so hostile to them (because of the assumption they felt subject to, that all adult educators in corporate settings were, by definition, capitalist lackeys) that they split off to form their own conference, the Academy of Human Resource Development. So an unfortunate bifurcation has developed in the field—unfortunate because in my opinion many people working in corporate settings are only too aware of the oppressive dimensions of the system they're a part of, and trying to work according to an ethic that challenges the workings of that system. They would subscribe wholeheartedly to the critiques by Baptiste and others mentioned earlier.

Marilyn: Could you perhaps explore for us more specifically the connections between the two fields?

Stephen: I guess that in the time that I've been working in adult education (since the 1970s) I'd say there are five interconnected elements between the two fields. Of course, both fields do deal with adults who are learning (whether these are called *learners*, *employees*, or *workers*) and both involve adults who are teaching these other adults (whether or not that process is publicly recognized as part of their practitioner activities). So many of the insights from adult education concerning the emotional rhythms of adult learning, adult learning styles, best practices in the field, and so on, are fairly easily transplanted into management education. Other elements that cross both fields would be self-directed learning, reflective practice, transformative learning, democratic education, and critical theory. I hope to elaborate on some of these in the discussions that follow.

Tom: What opportunities exist for incorporating adult education processes in management education programs?

Stephen: Before talking about how adult education processes can inform management education programs, I should probably lay out what I feel constitutes an adult educational process. To me, what makes something an example of an adult educational process is the tone and purpose it exhibits, rather than the particular practice or set of practices adopted. For example, I don't think that discussions in and of themselves are adult educational. Discussions can be counterfeit; that is, they can seem on the surface to be entirely open, but in reality, someone with power in the group is steering the conversation to a predetermined conclusion. Counterfeit discussions are something I explore further in *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005).

For something to be adult educational, the participants would have to be treated respectfully. To know what that meant, the educator would have to be engaged in a constant process of researching what was happening through participants' eyes—constantly soliciting anonymous evaluations from participants. The educator would then have to be responsive to whatever information was forthcoming regarding learners' perceptions of respectful behavior, or regarding any other concerns and problems that were being voiced. Being responsive to learners' concerns is not the same as automatically capitulating to the demands of the majority. You can be an educator and have 100% of a group tell you they don't want to be asked to think critically, but if you believe this is an important learning process in which they should be engaged, then you have a perfect right to stand by your agenda. But you need to respond to the concern voiced by rejustifying why you feel that purpose is so important, and being open to renegotiating how it might be achieved. So the tone of an adult educational encounter is one of respect, research, and responsiveness—all things that could be said of management education conducted in an adult education key.

Marilyn: A key focus in your writings has been your emphasis on critical reflection . . . could you summarize your thoughts about this as an "adult educational process"?

Stephen: The purpose of an adult educational process would focus on the engagement in critical thought by all involved—including the educator herself. *Critical thought* is thought in which all involved attempt to uncover the assumptions (individual and collective) they operate under, and then assess the accuracy and validity of these assumptions. This assessment would happen by participants attempting to view their practices (and the assumptions embedded in these) through as many different lenses as possible. Some of these lenses would be those of their own autobiographies, the lens of theory, the lens of colleagues' perceptions, and the lens of their own students', clients', or employees' eyes. One major emphasis in this process of critical analysis would be to uncover assumptions having to do with the exercise of power within the classroom, workplace, family, and community. Was power being exercised ethically? How was power moving around a social setting? What unacknowledged power dynamics were at play, and how were these inhibiting or enhancing people's learning? Another emphasis would be on uncovering hegemonic assumptions; that is, assumptions that are embraced because they are perceived as common sense and desirable, but that in fact are working against the best interests of those who are embracing them. This is the notion of critical reflection I develop in *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (Brookfield, 1995) and also in *The Power of Critical Theory* (Brookfield, 2005b).

Tom: What are some examples of how critical adult education processes might be applied in management education?

Stephen: I think management education could—and probably frequently does—incorporate many practices implied by my analysis of adult education. For example, viewed from an adult educational perspective, students in management education programs would be seen as cocreators of knowledge and coconstructors of the curriculum. This would mean that courses would be coplanned by students and instructors, in a spirit of true negotiation. A rough-and-ready equation might be that students are in control of 30% of the curriculum, faculty are in control of 30% of the curriculum, and the remaining 40% is negotiated. It would mean that dissertations and theses would be coauthored by teams of students, rather than being only under the control of one author. It would mean that at least once a week, students would complete some form of anonymous instrument about what they saw happening that week and how they were experiencing the program, that would then be summarized, made public, and responded to by the faculty. It would also mean an emphasis on team rather than solo teaching, with faculty modelling the critical scrutiny of their own assumptions that they were urging on students.

This last practice is one that particularly intrigues me. I think it's very hard to get learners to be critically reflective, unless the educator is prepared first to model her engagement in this process. So a management education degree conducted in an adult educational key would involve groups of faculty regularly reflecting on events that had happened in class, or in their wider workplaces, and asking colleagues to help them identify the assumptions embedded in these events and suggest different ways of interpreting these events. These kind of structured conversational protocols would be conducted in full view of the students, as a way of giving students a sense of what critical reflection on practice looks like, and also as a way of modelling the faculty's own commitment to what is a very difficult process. If you combined faculty modelling of critical conversation with regular public discussions of students' concerns and reactions (that were given anonymously by students) you would be showing students the connection between action and reflection. Each week faculty would be demonstrating how their actions in class were informed by their colleagues' and students' perceptions.

Marilyn: Specifically, what can management educators learn from adult education about team learning?

Stephen: Given that management education is increasingly emphasizing team learning, I think there are clear connections that can be made between the way this process is conceived and realized in adult and management education. As mentioned already, I don't think you can emphasize too much the importance of management education faculty doing a public modelling of their commitment to team learning in their own teaching and writing. The more that management faculty are publicly engaged in team teaching, team research, team writing, and team reflection on common problems, the more that they convey to students an atmosphere that supports this. One reason it is important that faculty do this is because people often assume that good team behavior means taking the reins and assiduously demonstrating their "leadership" by speaking frequently, being the author and deliverer of team progress reports, and so on. It is important that students learn early on that effective participation in teams does not boil down to talking a lot and being the person who writes, posts, and publicly reports the conversations a group is having. For example, in a doctoral program I helped design at National Louis University in Chicago, faculty hold a weekend admissions workshop in which applicants are asked to work with each other in small groups accomplishing various team tasks. If someone tries

to impress the faculty by immediately dominating a group, in the mistaken belief that this demonstrates the exercise of effective team leadership, this is a warning signal that the person may not be suitable for a cohort program in which participatory learning and team projects are stressed.

Tom: What team behaviors should faculty model?

Stephen: When modelling team behaviors for students, it is important that faculty show that effective team participation involves such things as: listening carefully, elucidating connections and links between different participants' contributions, showing appreciation for others' contributions, drawing others out through skillful questioning, calling for occasional periods of reflective silence, and being ready to change one's mind in the face of new arguments or information. This is very close to the conditions of Habermas' ideal speech situation (Brookfield, 2005a). Effective team participation sometimes also involves people arguing against the conventional wisdom and commonsense explanations a group immediately adheres to, and insisting that certain ignored or discredited ideas and traditions be included. This is what Marcuse called the practice of liberating tolerance in discussion (Brookfield, 2002). For example, critical debate or the "methodological belief" exercises ask participants to spend a limited time seeing a situation from a viewpoint they may never have inhabited before. If faculty can demonstrate how this happens in their own team teaching, this can help create a greater willingness on the part of students to engage in this same behavior. Also, if you're dealing with a multiracial group it's very helpful if the faculty group is also drawn from a range of racial backgrounds. The faculty can then talk in front of the students about the contradictions, tensions, and pleasures they experienced working as a teaching team—particularly how they negotiated the process of decision making. This helps enormously in readying students to deal with the same tensions in their own multiracial teams.

Marilyn: In your opinion, what are some indicators of effective team participation?

Stephen: It is helpful if faculty in management education programs can prescribe indicators of effective team participation that include behaviors that are quieter, more reflective, silent even. For example, in my own syllabi, I outline the indicators of effective participation by including specific behaviors such as: "Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said"; "Bring in a resource (a reading, Web link, video) not covered in the syllabus but that adds new information/perspectives to our learning"; "Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions and make this link explicit in your comment"; "Use body language (in only a slightly exaggerated way) to show interest in what different speakers are saying"; "Post a comment on the course chatroom that summarizes our conversations so far and/or suggests new directions and questions to be explored in the future"; "Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said and be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts"; "When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation to give you, and others, time to think."

Tom: How do you deal with dysfunctional team behaviors?

Stephen: One particular issue that is always raised around team learning concerns this area of *dysfunctional behaviors*—usually defined as one person unfairly dominating the activities of the group. I think we need to be wary of moving too quickly to label certain behavior as "dysfunctional." For example, a group

member who insists on others paying attention to a viewpoint, perspective, or intellectual tradition that the majority do not see as relevant, may (as I've already argued) be practicing liberating tolerance, as Marcuse defined it. The others may see this group member as behaving in a dysfunctional way because he or she is preventing the group from coming to a speedy decision on what to accomplish and how to accomplish it. Yet without such a member, groups may never challenge dominant ideology, never explore alternative political or racial perspectives. Stopping a premature rush to consensus may be just what the group will benefit most from in the long run. Clearly, though, there are times when egomaniacs, or the extremely needy, are taking up far too much of the available air time.

Marilyn: What do we do then?

Stephen: In addressing this problem I think we are helped if some obvious preparatory steps are followed. First, the team has to spend some time developing ground rules for itself. My preference, which I outline in *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) is for teams to reflect on their previous experiences of good and bad team learning, and to use these to develop commonly agreed ground rules for their activities. If the team has agreed on ground rules they will follow, then their repeated contravention by a particular member becomes a matter for the whole team, and not a dispute between a few members of the team. Second, the faculty group should have spent some time modelling team participation in the manner already described. Third, any indicators of effective team participation that are specified in a syllabus can be as behaviorally specific as possible to reduce misunderstanding to a reasonable minimum. Of course, you can take all these preparatory steps, and a truly disruptive individual can seem to agree to them, but in reality be completely oblivious to them in his or her actual behavior.

One thing I've found very helpful is instituting some kind of process through which team members anonymously provide data on how they feel the team is working. The team leader (or faculty member if we're talking about a formal university program) then summarizes this data and reports back to the team. If opportunities are created for anonymously given data to be supplied by team members, my experience has been that they will immediately identify dysfunctional behavior—such as a team member taking up 90% of the available air time and forcing his or her agenda on others—on their anonymous commentary sheets. If I receive feedback sheets on the team's functioning in which a majority of team members identify a particular person's behavior as getting in the way of the team working well together, then I do two things. First, I report back to the whole team that comments were made about certain behaviors getting in the way of the team's functioning. I frame the problem as a general problem the team needs to address and suggest ways they can bring their ground rules to the attention of anyone seen to be flouting these.

Second, I take the individual identified as "dysfunctional" aside and give that person a summary of the comments made by other team members. Although this is never an easy conversation to have, I have found that the team members' comments serve as a body of unequivocal data that the dominating person must take seriously. When you present data to a person showing that others in a team note his or her behavior as stifling their own contributions, the talkative member finds it much harder to dismiss, or rationalize away, the problem. This data helps avoid the dynamic whereby you, as the authority figure, are perceived by the domineering team member as trying to control

his or her challenge to your power. Instead, you become the conduit of other people's concerns. Talkative students can deny that they are trying to cut others off and can maintain that their frequency of speech is just a sign of their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the class. But they find it very difficult to ignore the fact that their peers perceive their behavior a certain way, no matter how unfair or erroneous they feel these perceptions might be.

Tom: Are there other specific approaches you have found useful in dealing with difficult students in teams?

Stephen: When presenting domineering students with comments that refer unflatteringly to their actions, it is important that these students know the conversation is confidential. When I have these conversations, I tell the student concerned that there will be no reference to the conversation in class, and that other students will not know their comments have been passed on. I don't want to shame the dominant student in front of his or her peers, and neither do I want team members to think of weekly reflection sheets as a way to "get" students they don't like. So the conversation remains private, a matter of me sharing privately with another student some information about how his or her peers perceive his or her behavior.

This doesn't mean, of course, that it's easy for me, or the student concerned, to have this conversation. Students often feel that the teacher, or other class members, are trying to "get" them. Students react with a complex mixture of anger, embarrassment, and humiliation. Sometimes this resentment can be eased by my suggesting specific things the student can do to remedy the situation. I might ask that after making a contribution, the student wait until at least three other people have spoken before speaking again, or silently to count to 15 before answering a question another team member has raised. This focus on future actions gives the student a project to work at and helps save some shreds of self-respect.

I can report that these conversations have often had very dramatic and positive effects. Students who consistently interrupted other students to correct what they saw as lamentably erroneous comments have become more responsive group members who have struggled to monitor their contributions judiciously. Of course, this doesn't always happen. There are some students who remain more or less untouched by group ground rules, other students' complaints, data from peers, and conversations with teachers. But the frequency of dysfunctional, egomaniacal behavior has sometimes been reduced when I have followed the procedure I've just described.

Marilyn: Focusing on the context for learning now, what does adult education have to say about how workplace cultures can foster or impede the learning of participants?

Stephen: Many adult educators are today focused strongly on organizational and workplace learning. Indeed, the department at Teachers College (Columbia University, New York), where I spent 10 years as a faculty member, has refocused its attention in this area. So many people have spent a lot of time thinking about this question.

One thing that strikes me immediately is how much an organization can do to foster a culture of learning that has little to do with the running of formal programs. One thing I learned from Myles Horton (1990) is that systems and structures usually determine behavior. Change the systems and structures governing rewards, or framing day-to-day practices, and you change the behaviors of people who live within those systems and structures. This has

always struck me as a depressingly behavioristic perspective, one that robs people of individual choice—particularly the choice to resist structures (a choice that, in his usual contrary way, Myles was most concerned to foster). But I have to say that my own personal experience in community adult education and in higher education, as well as a big part of my intellectual orientation (in critical theory), confirms the accuracy of this perspective. If you accept any part of critical theory's emphasis on the influence of dominant ideology as reflected in "common sense" ideas and everyday practices, then the idea of autonomously determined behavior, reflecting the internal yearnings of particular personalities, becomes quite suspect. Structural and systemic imperatives and predispositions are embedded within us and frame our behavior, much more deeply than we know.

This is why I spend a lot of time thinking about how the systems within an organization—particularly its reward systems—affect so much behavior. In higher education organizations, for example, it's quite clear that faculty behavior is very much tied to what gets rewarded, usually scholarly publication. The logic of my position is that instead of running workshops on how to be a learning organization, far more is gained if the reward system is changed so that it consistently names and honors learning. This would happen if performance appraisals involved the employee documenting annually what she has learned and how this was accomplished, supported by documentation from peers, subordinates, and superiors confirming that the claimed learning had, in fact, occurred. Hiring practices could reflect this emphasis, with the screening of applicants focused on what and how the person learned in his or her last job and how he or she planned to continue such learning in the position applied for. Those with positional power and authority would find some way to document their own engagement in the process of learning. The CEO would have to use town hall meetings, organizational newsletters, e-mail—whatever communication channels were available—to document the learning that she or he had engaged in recently, and that she or he was planning to pursue. The organization would also have to regularly provide time and space for its members to reflect on what they had learned in the last week or so, and what their learning over the next few weeks would focus on.

Tom: From a learning organization perspective, how important is instituting regular time for conversations?

Stephen: For me, a prime indicator that a learning organization was in place would be the organization instituting a regular "talking practice" period. This would be a time, maybe once a week for an hour or so, when work teams would have the space and time to gather to talk about whatever was on their minds, and tap into each others' experiences to gain insights into the problems they were experiencing. It would be crucial that no bottom line would exist of any task having to be accomplished. The only reason people got together would be to talk through the problems they were trying to understand and respond to that week. So reports or documentation of the successful completion of a previously specified task would be prohibited. Also, there would have to be no pre-determined agenda (unless a work team decided in a previous meeting to create one). The agenda for each team would change from week to week and be determined by whatever problem or practice people wished to focus on that week. Again, people in positions of power and authority would participate in such groups and be the first to disclose the learning from their errors that had occurred.

Marilyn: Etienne Wenger and his colleagues have discussed extensively such approaches, in their writing on “communities of practice” in the workplace. How important is the participation of organizational leaders in conversations like this, that include critical reflection?

Stephen: Whenever I’m asked into an organization to help its members become better at critical thinking—whether it’s corporate, nonprofit, proprietary, a higher education institution, whatever—I always start by telling people that they can pay me as much as they like, but that any workshops I conduct will have little effect unless the person who is regarded as the public head of the institution (the CEO, president, commanding officer, principal, etc.) is publicly observed to be participating in these, and seen to be the first to volunteer to engage in any risky activities that critical thinking requires (such as the occasional disclosure of error). Only once can I think of an instance in which the CEO was willing to do that, to demonstrate, in front of the whole work force, his own engagement in critical thinking. Also, you stand very little chance of getting past the cultural inhibition that holds that learning from mistakes invites professional disaster, unless CEOs, heads of departments, line supervisors—anyone who has the responsibility for directing others—is willing to talk publicly about how much they have learned, and continue to learn, from their mistakes. Certainly, junior members of any organizational work team will usually never dream of admitting a mistake unless and until the team’s leader, as well as other senior figures of the organization, repeatedly admit to their mistakes and disclose how these are triggers to beneficial new learning. This needs to be a valued organization-wide practice (something I’ve never seen).

Tom: Turning more now to global perspectives, how can adult educators contribute to the discourse on corporate social responsibility?

Stephen: This is a tough question, particularly when public relations (PR) departments of corporations spend so much money and time “branding” themselves as compassionate entities interested only in doing public good. PR corporate commercials show happy employees and happy recipients of corporate services and are devoid of any smear of worker alienation, profit expansion, union busting, racism, sexism, or environmental pollution. Those commercials are pretty hard to take. I think, though, that openings do exist to exert some pressure for good, in even the most rapaciously capitalist organizations. As I said earlier, many people working in corporations are behaving in the best traditions of adult education, trying to open up a little democratic space here, critiquing a demeaning or dehumanizing practice there. The first thing they need to do is get in touch with each other. Change rarely happens as a result of wholly individual effort—though one person armed with sheer dogged determination can outlast and outwit people with strategic sophistication who don’t want to put in the hours of sitting through committee meetings. Rather, change tends to be linked to some sort of collective initiative. So, for activist effect, as well as for the emotional sustenance it provides, we need to build alliances with like-minded peers.

We also need to learn the culturally approved language of the institution. A junior member of an organization who wishes to persuade those in power of the merits of a new and potentially threatening initiative she or he wishes to sponsor would be well advised to couch her or his proposal in accessible terms familiar to organizational heads. In doing this, it is immensely helpful if you know the language that is spoken and approved by those in power. It

is surprising how much you can accomplish with no one objecting to, or even noticing, activities that are strongly alternative to the mainstream, as long as these are described in terms that are familiar and approved. One particularly effective approach is to use the language of the oft-touted mission statement and hold the organization accountable to it.

Marilyn: Beyond the workplace, what is your view of the role adult educators can play that promotes the critical principles we have been discussing?

Stephen: Adult educators can also contribute by doing good work outside the institution in terms of civic education (something that has been sidelined somewhat in recent years). We need to find a way of teaching a structuralized worldview. A structuralized view of the world is one that emphasizes how individual decisions are framed by much broader social structures and economic forces. It requires a familiarity with history, political economy, and sociology. The critical theorist Erich Fromm (1956) argued that the development of such a structuralized view was really only possible with adult learners. In his way of thinking, adults not only had a greater interest in developing such a perspective but also possessed the intellectual capability to do this in a way that was not possible for them in adolescence. An interpretation of Fromm's call to develop a structuralized picture of the world is something that Fromm's contemporary, C. W. Mills, attempted to provide. Mills (1954) argued that a structuralized view of the world emerges when adults learn "to turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues and rationally open problems" (p. 12). If adults start to see situations in their private lives as concrete manifestations of broader social and political contradictions, they will see that changing their individual lives is impossible without political action. Hence, "to the extent that the adult college is effective, it is going to be political; its students are going to try to influence decisions of power" (p. 16).

And of course, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, you should never, ever give up.

Notes

1. In the summer of 2005, Dr. Thomas Kalliath and Dr. Marilyn Laiken prepared 23 questions covering five categories (adult education and management education, lifelong learning, team learning, organizational and workplace learning, and corporate social responsibility) that were put to Professor Stephen Brookfield. Professor Brookfield responded to these questions broadly in five topic categories, and the manuscript was further reworked by Dr. Kalliath and Dr. Laiken into an interview format, with 16 questions and responses to these questions.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (Eds.). (1992). *Critical management studies*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (1996). *Making sense of management: A critical introduction*. London: Sage.
- Baptiste, I. (2001). Educating lone wolves: Pedagogical implications of human capital theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51(3), 184-201.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2002). Re-assessing subjectivity, criticality and inclusivity: Marcuse's challenge to adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52(4), 265-280.

- Brookfield, S. D. (2005a). Learning democratic reason: The adult educational project of Jurgen Habermas. *Teachers College Record*, 107(6), 1127-1168.
- Brookfield, S.D. (2005b). *The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (2005). *Discussion as a way of teaching: tools and techniques for democratic classrooms* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fenwick, T. (2004). Toward a critical HRD in theory and practice. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 54(3), 193-209.
- Fromm, E. (1956). *The sane society*. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul.
- Horton, M. (1990). *The long haul*. New York: Doubleday.
- Howell, S. L., Carter, V. K., & Schied, F. M. (2002). Gender and women's experience at work: A critical and feminist perspective on human resource development. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52(2), 112-127.
- Mills, C. W. (1954). *Mass society and liberal education*. Chicago: Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults.
- Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2003). Women and consciousness in the "learning organization": Emancipation or exploitation? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(4), 228-241.
- Pas, A. (2003, July). *A student's perspective on critical management education: Narratives of identity in classrooms of difference?* Paper presented at the Critical Management Studies Conference, Lancaster, U.K.
- Perriton, L., & Reynolds, M. (2004). From pedagogy of possibility to pedagogy of refusal? *Management Learning*, 35(1), 61-77.
- Reynolds, M. (1998). Reflection and critical reflection in management learning. *Management Learning*, 29(2), 183-200.
- Watson, T. (2001). Beyond managism: Negotiated narratives and critical management education in practice. *British Journal of Management*, 12, 385-396.