Civil Society, Cultural Hegemony, and Citizenship: Implications for Adult Educators

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Abstract: The participants in this symposium provide a panorama of positions about civil society, citizenship and the dynamics of the exercise of power in the world of adult education. Theoretical approaches range from postmodernism to cultural studies to Marxist and critical theoretical positions. Case studies are equally diverse, ranging from North and Latin America to the Middle East.

The nineteenth century concept of "civil society" experienced an unprecedented rebirth during and after the crises that led to the fall of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc. The concept has, since 1989, travelled to non-Western societies stretching from the Middle East to Africa, Japan, and Latin America. Equally significant is its extensive use by activists, academics, government circles, and the media in the birthplace of the concept -- West Europe. It is no exaggeration to claim that it is acquiring (together with its related concepts such as citizenship, and democracy) hegemonic status in the social sciences and humanities.

The rebirth of the concept and its application to diverse societies has thrown much light on the limitations and potentials of the concept. It has at the same time raised serious questions about the theoretical and epistemological assumptions underlying the concept. If Marx virtually abandoned the concept in his later work, many theorists today raise it to the level of a social theory capable of accounting for the dynamics of the globalizing world. There is, however, no consensus on the meaning of the concept even among those who find in it an indispensable heuristic opening.

The concept is of particular interests to educators, who have been debating for a long time the relationship between education and society, education and the state, the role of education in the (re)production of citizenry, or in the dialectics of hegemony and resistance. Many find the concept adequate for critiquing the way the state and the market exercise power through the construction and provision of lifelong learning. The participants in this symposium provide a panorama of positions about civil society, citizenship and the dynamics of the exercise of power in the world of adult education. Theoretical approaches range from postmodernism to cultural studies to Marxist and critical theoretical positions. Case studies are equally diverse, ranging from North and Latin America to the Middle East.

In many Western countries, social movements have been involved in the struggle over adult education. By contrast, in many developing societies, especially in the "modern" Middle East, the state has monopolized the provision of adult education and has reduced it to literacy campaigns. A central concern of adult educators with a critical or radical perspective is: How can

adult education address the problems of poverty, patriarchy, equality, democracy, environment, peace, and justice? Any serous intervention in these areas often involves considerable redistribution of power. The papers in this symposium address this question in different ways. Thus, what follows is the summation of each author's case and analysis.

Pat Durish argues that the recent investigation into police treatment of student protesters at the APEC summit brought the issue of protest to the forefront of the public imagination in Canada. Reports and commentary emanating from diverse sources conjure up remarkably similar images of placard waving, angry youth shouting incoherently at men in suits. Inevitably, protest is seen as a strategy of last resort; a pastime of the youthfully naive, hysterical or militant feminists, the downtrodden or those who simply have too much time on their hands. Despite its historical persistence, protest continues to occupy a place on the margins of democratic political theory - an unfortunate but necessary adjunct to rational political deliberation. Even theorists sympathetic to the cause view protest as a means of allowing the marginalized to gain access to formal political processes (Sparks: 1997).

Feminists have long argued that the category of citizen, as it is defined in liberal democratic discourse, not only excludes women but is premised on the very fact of their exclusion. Furthermore, the continued theoretical demarcation of social space as private and public is the lynch pin upon which women's subordination rests and citizenship is forged (Fraser: 1989). However, citizenship is both discursive and performative (Landes: 1996). In conventional democratic theory, rational deliberation is viewed as the most appropriate form of civic engagement.

To include women and other marginalized groups would necessitate a complete overhaul of the category of citizen. However, to dethrone the masculine subject as the normative model from which citizenship is derived would also call into question the privileging of the speech act

which lies at the centre of the deliberative process. The privileging of speech over other forms of expression marks the underlying masculinist nature - denoted by its emphasis on rationality - upon which liberal discourse rests. Protest as both public spectacle and everyday rebellious act could then be considered as a viable means for the enactment of citizenship. The implications of this move are profound. The boundaries of the political landscape would need to be redrawn; social space, political practice and participation would need to be reconceptualized.

A move to bring protest within the fold of acceptable political practice would mean imparting to citizens an agency that is hitherto unprecedented. This means subscribing to a vision of politics founded on a Foucauldian notion of power in which domination and resistance always operate concurrently. Protest is the means by which the marginalized other discovers itself as a subject capable of self-knowledge (Bhaba: 1997). Through protest alternative publics are formed and that which is private is brought into the public sphere. When envisioned in this way, protest functions as an important mode of articulation through which historical and contingent links between knowing subjects are forged (Mouffe: 1997). More importantly, protest is a means by which subjects come to know themselves as citizens.

In the highly differentiated milieu of large scale capitalism protest represents a performative form of annunciation. Far from being disruptive, protest functions as a cathartic exercise which allows for submerged identities and desires to be expressed publicly. Through

protest citizens are able to challenge not only the power and ethical status of political institutions and processes but also the form and means by which the body politic is represented. In a western context, it is becoming increasingly clear that the most powerful forms of collective action are those that move beyond the realm of particular issues to subvert the norms of representation that structure and sustain relations of power (Butler:1990). Protest provides a vantage point from which to view the contradictions inherent in a particular form of social organization (Douglas: 1966). The implication for adult educators in rethinking protest are myriad. When acknowledged as an acceptable and necessary form of civic engagement and political expression, protest becomes an important site for pedagogical intervention and learning as it involves the exploration of issues and representation, as well as the creation of new political subjects.

Rachel Gorman suggests that in the debate on the role of civil society there has been little attention paid to the ways in which adult educators are confined by state and market structures. Using experience and research in the field of Developmental Services in Ontario, she discusses how adult educators are positioned vis a vis the state, the market, and the hegemonic assumptions that are made about clients.

In recent years, the Canadian government policy has made a sharp turn toward eliminating social programs, and privatizing services. Cuts in funding to Developmental Services agencies have translated into less staffing hours and less advocacy. Agencies no longer pay support workers to fight for jobs in the community and, instead, rely on piecework contracts from for-profit companies. Disabled people working in agency vocational programs earn an average of $1.00 per hour. The market looms large behind these changes in government policy. Some of the largest funders of the Conservative Party's election campaign were for-profit health care agencies, who are poised to begin staffing and running sheltered workshops and group homes for a profit. These developments mirror private security companies' bids to run prisons for a profit.

The Ministry of Training and Human Resources and the Ministry of Community and Social Services are putting much effort into convincing adult educators in all sectors to prepare their students/clients for the "inevitable" global political economy. More importantly, we are asked to convince our students/clients that chronic underemployment and constant retraining are unavoidable aspects of our technologically advanced world. Reclaiming our educational spaces will require a coordinated struggle to reverse government policy changes, to strengthen the educational mandates of our agencies, and to resist and undermine the corporate takeover of minds.

Shahrzad Mojab studies the state of adult education in the Middle East, especially its Arab region, and examine adult education as a site of struggle for power involving numerous and highly unequal actors. She claims that Middle Eastern societies are experiencing rapid transformation due to both internal developments and the globalization of economy and culture. The process of change is, however, riddled with contradictions; we see abject poverty in the midst of wealth, despotism in a growing civil society, tribal-nomadic relations in a region

devastated by rising megacities, and massive labour movements in the context of disintegrating economies. In theocracies such as Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, or Saudi Arabia, individuals are not treated as *citizens* in the modern, democratic, sense of the word. Women are officially denied full citizenship status in these states. Formal education is usually a state monopoly, and adult education has, in most countries, been reduced to literacy campaigns. In spite of considerable investment in formal and informal education, the majority of the adult population remains illiterate. Patriarchy, poverty, militarization, insufficient investment, and the absence of individual and political freedom are some of the main constraints on the provision of lifelong education. Education is often viewed as a subversive phenomenon to be tamed through the control of the student movement, women's movement as well as the suppression of academic freedom. A wide gap separates the practice of adult education in the Middle East and current visions of adult learning.

The explosion of urban population, the revolution in communication technologies and the globalization of economy and culture create more expectation, and generate opposition to state policies and practices such as militarization and war, suppression of dissident voices, poverty, and oppression of women. The response of the state has been the stifling of civil society and social movements. If the Middle Eastern state is the main obstacle to the formation or functioning of a civil society of educated adults, the Western democratic state and its powerful market economy seem to be failing to educate adults in the growing "knowledge economy."

Amish Morrell contends that in North America, the 1960s saw a blossoming of counter-cultural movements in response to the alienation of urban industrial society, the Vietnam war, and the impending crises of social and environmental justice. Many of those who came of age within the 1960s counterculture went "back-to-the-land" in search of simple, self-sufficient lifestyles close to nature. Most took up subsistence farming and home-making, often supplementing their income with crafts production, or occasional work (Gould: 1997; Holm: 1998; and Jeffrey: 1997). This paper explores how alternative forms of cultural production can function as transformative pedagogical practices.

To better understand alternative cultures as sites of transformative learning, it is necessary to conceptualize learning as occurring in everyday cultural texts and representations, and through ordinary social and cultural practices. As such, learning is not confined to traditional

educational institutions. Culture is simultaneously the everyday sites, processes, and products of learning, too. If one of the goals of adult education is to enable full participation in society, we also need to consider cultural literacy as a necessary for active citizenship. Cultural literacy, however, is differential. The social difference is deployed through defining who has access to particular forms of cultural meaning. How back-to-the-landers read rural landscapes was largely informed by a romantic vision of nature and rural communities to which they had

privileged access as members of middle-class urban society. As critical adult educators we need to understand how access to cultural capital differentially constitutes our material and social realities.

Daniel Schugurensky's presentation will look at the linkages between citizenship-building and a transformative adult education in the transition to the 21st century. The first part of the presentation will frame the discussion within the context of neoliberal globalization and the retrenchment of the welfare state, and will examine changes in local,

national and international configurations, as well as the changing roles of the state, the market and civil society. The current theoretical debate on citizenship will be analyzed, using as a starting point the three dimensions of citizenship (civil, political and social) identified by H.T. Marshall in his seminal work on the topic. The discussion on citizenship will connect to a critical examination of different models of citizenship education. The second part of the presentation will summarize the debates on participatory democracy and representative democracy, with a focus on the strengths and weaknesses of recent city-wide experiments of participatory democracy, and on the implications for adult education. In the conclusions, the paper will address the challenges and opportunities that the transition to the 21st century poses for an emancipatory citizenship education and for building a more just and democratic society.

Deborah Sword states that the 1930s to 50s are the modern origins of social movements. First seen as dangerous, they are now acknowledged as an important part of the political landscape. However, the turbulent times from which they emerged have changed and social movements have changed with them. If adult educators are to be agents of social change, it would be helpful to look at three trends.

The first trend, that is either disturbing or exciting depending on one's perspective, is the reduction of trust in public institutions (Nevitte 1996). As the publics' access to information and insight into official workings grows, trust decreases. As trust in officialdom decreases, the publics are feeling a need to become more educated so that they can engage in dialogue about the issues that impact them.

A second trend is that the marketplace has noticed that it must change its marketing strategy. It is trying not to insult women's intelligence nor despoil the environment and to include minorities and respect youth. It discovered that when it behaves ethically, known as corporate social responsibility, it's market share and profits increase. Thus, it is also slowly changing the way it does business, as well as its image. Other sectors are modifying how they do business to reflect this shift.

Civil society organizations (CSO), riding the third trend, are finding themselves invited to the seats of power. Occasionally, financial assistance accompanies the invitation. Their expertise is being sought by governments too stretched and under-resourced to do their jobs and too lacking in the alternatives to know the right thing to do without the input of CSO. CSO are moving from opposition to proposition, from protest to proposal and governments are listening. While many of the current adversaries continue to engage in their usual animosities, in other cases, it is becoming a challenge to keep up with the new alliances, often called partnerships.

In summary, the theoretical triad of market, state and civil society, or the dyad of publics/ private sphere, is not reflecting all that is really going on in practice. The lines among or between them are blurring: corporations are sponsoring CSO events and funding social movements,

governments are hosting multi-stakeholder roundtable consultations in which consensus decision-making is setting policy, CSO are advising corporations and governments as outside experts and consultants. The questions remain: is this cooperation or co-optation? Is the incremental change that comes when CSO and social movements have some influence with policy makers enough? when the sectors or spheres share their learning, do the current dominant structures privilege some knowledge over the other(s).

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