Learning From the Past, Organizing for the Future: Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract
This article analyses key events in the history of adult and community education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It draws on historical sources to examine the role of grassroots community activism and local and national networking in upholding a broad vision of adult and community-based education, in the face of a hostile policy climate. The authors suggest practical and theoretical lessons from their historical analysis: first, the possibilities for adult education that exist beyond the state and its apparatus; second, the need to recognize the power of the state to support or attempt to strangle adult education by controlling or withdrawing funding; third, the need for broadly based alliances across and beyond education. Drawing on critical adult education theory, the authors suggest a range of political and pedagogical actions that adult educators and their allies might take to advance adult education’s contribution to social change and social justice.

Keywords
adult and community education, Aotearoa New Zealand, neoliberalism, critical theory

Antonio Gramsci (1971), one of the central theoretical influences on radical adult educational thought and action (Coben, 1998; Mayo, 1999), argued that the study of history is crucial to developing a conscious understanding of present power relations

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and that this understanding can inform transformational action in the interests of the oppressed. This article draws on published sources (Smith, 2000; Te Hau, 1972; Tobias 1994, 2004; Walker 1980, 1990) to trace the early history of adult and community education (ACE) in Aotearoa New Zealand, as it has unfolded in the context of domestic and global political and cultural developments. It then uses contemporary accounts (records of meetings, policy documents, speeches, newsletters, and published and unpublished literature) to describe the changes in the fortunes of ACE—from the idealism and reforms of the 1970s, the setbacks and struggles of the 1980s and 1990s, to the fragile optimism of the first decade of the 21st century. It goes on to describe the current threats to the existence of the ACE sector as consequences of the election of a government unsympathetic to the broader aims of adult education, a climate of financial restraint, and the continuing influence of a neoliberalizing agenda in the field of education (Ball, Fischman, & Gvirts, 2003; Bourdieu, 1998; Harvey, 2005). We draw practical lessons from our historical analysis (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000), particularly around the relationship between adult education and the state and the need for adult educators in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, to form broad-based alliances with other progressive forces. We suggest how practitioners, academics, and their allies might develop their capacity to act and to reflect dialectically (Allman, 1999, 2001; Freire, 1972, 1973; Gramsci, 1971) to steer a way forward in neoliberal times, sustaining a broad based and progressive vision of adult education and learning.

The Historical Context of Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

A number of writers (King, 2003; Smith, 2000; Te Hau, 1972; Tobias, 1994, 2004; Walker, 1980, 1990) have traced the history of education in Aotearoa New Zealand from its precapitalist, precolonial roots. As they point out, in the long period before European settlement, there would have been no need to label as "education" any specific sphere of human activity. Kinship-based Māori social and organizational arrangements—whānau (family), hapū (subtribe), and iwi (tribe)—undoubtedly had a central role in passing on knowledge, understanding, and skills. The Marae (meeting house) and Te Whare Wānanga (house of knowledge) too were important locations for sharing and transmitting spiritual and technical understanding, whereas kaumātua (elders) were repositories of knowledge and wisdom.

The increasing settlement of Pākehā (Europeans) from the 1700s onwards initially resulted in a two way flow of knowledge between the indigenous and newcomer populations, but increasingly the British colonizers imposed political and cultural dominance and a new hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) was established. The development of educational institutions on a British model was integral to colonial strategies to preserve and extend British influence. Among the imports from Britain were educational organizations. These included Mechanics' Institutes, providing technical education and library facilities for working men; Christian and temperance organizations, which aimed to tame the wilder side of settler life; and the Workers' Educational Association,
formed as a partnership between organized labor and the universities. ACE organizations, curricula, and policy still reflect this colonial heritage.

However, colonization was not uncontested, and the current structure and discourse of ACE in Aotearoa New Zealand has also been shaped by "military, political, economic and ideological" struggles (Tobias, 2004, p. 570), in which both Māori and Pākehā were protagonists. In the face of increasing encroachments on Māori sovereignty, for example, movements in the north and south of the country sought to promote unity through hēke (marches) and through nonviolent resistance to illegal land occupation and confiscation. A significant political and legal marker in these struggles is the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, which framed the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, established politically the bicultural status of Aotearoa New Zealand and implied a partnership relationship in which the cultural values, skills, and world view of both peoples were to be respected. However, the 1840s also saw the wholesale appropriation of Māori land by the British and the erosion of Māori autonomy in relation to education.

From the beginning of the 20th century the state became involved in providing and subsidizing education and training for adults, and in 1935, Aotearoa New Zealand's first Labour Government established a welfare state. In the context of widespread discussion of education issues and ideas, the community center movement was initiated and forms of adult education linked closely with community development were promoted. Although World War II stalled progress, the postwar period saw an extension of the community center movement and expansion of adult education nationally and regionally. Throughout this period, a liberal tradition of adult education was kept alive, providing opportunities for cultural and social development while promoting debate on a range of issues. But the main focus of postwar educational investment was the expansion of secondary education and, alongside it, the rapid and serendipitous expansion of schools-based adult education classes.

**Into the 1970s: Idealism and Reform**

A number of international and domestic factors affected the development of ACE in Aotearoa New Zealand from the late 1960s (Benseman, 2005; Tobias, 2004). On an ideological level, the process of decolonization stimulated radical thinking about the meaning and methods of education, particularly adult education (Freire, 1972; Illich, 1973; Nyerere, 1978), which was relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand as its economic and political ties with Britain had begun to weaken. At the same time, the emergence of worldwide social movements—antiapartheid, anti-Vietnam War, antinuclear, environmentalist, indigenous, and feminist—during the late 1960s and 1970s gave practical meaning to the concept of learning through struggle (Foley, 1999), outside the realms of state funding and control. The growing global interest in lifelong education—sponsored through UNESCO and the OECD (Dave, 1976; Faure, 1972; Lengrand, 1970)—as a counterbalance to the emphasis on formal schooling—informed both policy and practice (Benseman, 2005; Tobias, 2004).
Movement-based education—around peace, the environment, women's, and Māori rights—blossomed. Elsie Locke (1992) has chronicled the history of the peace movement and described many of the nonformal and informal ACE activities that went alongside political action. Boanas (1989) too notes that peace education had its origins in the grassroots work and public education undertaken by peace groups, including Peace Squadron protests against visits to Aotearoa by nuclear-armed warships. Other significant initiatives outside the boundaries of state control also had relevance for the development of adult education. Walker (1980) points to the Māori renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s and draws attention to the work of the Māori Women’s Welfare League and Nga Tamatoa (the young warriors) in promoting the resurgence of Māori language. From the 1970s, there was rapid growth in the teaching of Māori in schools and the community. The Kohanga Reo movement was launched, focusing on children’s Māori language learning (Smith, 2000), whereas in 1978 Ngoi Pewhairangi was appointed to the National Council of Adult Education to promote Māori language learning in the community. According to Dakin (1988), her classes were “radically informal and community based” (p. 100) rather than following the formal institutional mould of language learning. One consequence of this was the establishment of Te Ataarangi, a national nongovernmental organization committed to promoting informal community-based learning of Māori. Perhaps one of the most remarkable movements of protest, resistance, and popular education at this time took place as a response to the 1981 Springbok rugby tour. The movement involved thousands of people from a range of political traditions in marches and other forms of protest in every geographical center in which games were held (Beyer, 1981) and provided evidence of the power of popular education blossoming outside the state.

Finally, at the level of domestic policy, under the 1972-1975 Labour Government ACE gained a momentum that was reflected in the expansion of government support to adult education for nonvocational and social democratic as well as vocational purposes. Such developments included the inauguration of the first community colleges, the establishment of adult literacy projects, the state funding of voluntary organizations and distance learning institutions, and the initiation of Learning Exchanges around the country. From 1974, adults were able to enroll in day schools, in addition to their being able to attend school-based evening classes. Attention was paid, too, to the educational needs of adults in rural communities, which resulted in the setting up of government-funded Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs). Adult education coordinators in REAPs, along with school-based adult education organizers, began to play a major role in ACE provision, which has been reflected in their dominance, in the ensuing decades, in the regional and national networks of adult educators.

1980s and 1990s: Struggles With Neoliberalism

Harvey (2005) describes the period from 1978 to 1980 as pivotal in the global spread of neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism is underpinned by a conviction that the market is paramount and that the state should take a minimal role in the social realm.
Deregulation, privatization, and curbing the power of organized labor are central to the advancement of a neoliberal agenda (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2005). In the field of postcompulsory education and training, the logic of neoliberalism places the responsibility for educational participation or nonparticipation, success or failure, on the individual rather than on government. In this formulation, the valid outcome of education is the development of human capital (Becker, 1975) rather than social, cultural, or political development. The notion that individuals carry the primary responsibility for investing in their own future through the accumulation of educational credentials and that this, in turn, will produce benefits for the national economy has come to dominate postcompulsory education and training policy since the late 1970s. However, Harvey (2007) suggests that the development of neoliberal policies and the specifics of their integration within national contexts have not been uniform. The full impact of neoliberalism began to be felt later in Aotearoa New Zealand than in the United States and the United Kingdom, but it was felt with considerable force (Kelsey, 1993, 1997).

The last half of the 1980s is generally agreed (Benseman, 2005; Kelsey 1997; Zepke, 2001) to mark the point at which, under a succession of governments of differing political hues (but beginning under a Labour Government), Aotearoa came under the influence of a starkly neoliberalizing agenda. A brake was applied to educational expenditure, which brought cuts in ACE funding. Policies of “user pays” in education, which were gaining political ascendancy in the United Kingdom and the United States, were markedly apparent in Aotearoa. Benseman (2005) describes the effects on the ACE sector during this period: drastic funding cuts, removal of government advisory support, the drop in membership of Adult and Community Education Aotearoa (the national nongovernmental umbrella organization for the ACE sector), and the decline in morale and activity.

Zepke (2001) suggests that from 1987, adult education in Aotearoa was remade in the name of neoliberalism. From this point on, he argues, the social democratic consensus on education—as a public good—was “swept away in a tidal change” (p. 10). Tobias (2004) indicates, however, that neoliberal ideologies did not go uncontested. It is also important to stress that a relatively small number of ACE practitioners kept the vision of a progressive future alive through difficult times. Through the 1990s the national ACE organization remained active. Although it received little funding and scant recognition from the state, it continued to organize an annual conference and a community learning week, produce a national newsletter, maintain links with UNESCO, and act as a political lobby group.

Progressive forces outside government contested the assumptions of neoliberalism. Walker (1990) describes the Māori Educational Development Conference of 1984 and its radical influence in advancing Māori education. And Catherine Delahunty (2001), in a speech to the ACE Aotearoa Annual Conference, cites Freire (1972) and Newman (1994) with reference to the struggles during this period around Māori language education (Te Reo) and culture (tikanga) and the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti). She stresses the resilience of radical ideas and action:
The values of the veterans who began educational movements such as workers education, adult literacy, feminist analysis, Te Tiriti education, structural analysis, Te Reo and tikanga Māori education have not been destroyed. They have survived in communities and some institutions, like guerrillas in the jungle, moving swiftly through a once familiar landscape while Agent Orange aka “user pays” defoliates the vegetation around them. (p. 79)

Although the history of ACE in the 1980s and 1990s may be read as a history of defeat in policy terms, again we can identify the continuity of progressive strands of thought and action, informed by radical education theory and practice. In the face of the neoliberal onslaught, deepening recession, and high unemployment levels, there was a growth in the number of public programs of education intended to raise people’s consciousness on a range of issues: In the city of Christchurch, for example, the overall number of such programs increased substantially over the period from 1983 to 1991 (Tobias, 2000; Tobias & Henderson, 1996). The momentum of debate and protest over the changes in economic and social policy grew with increasing rapidity in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the impact of neoliberal policies on every aspect of the social fabric became clearer.

1999-2008: A Fragile Optimism

Between 1999 and 2008, Aotearoa witnessed a resurgence of policy interest in ACE. In 1999, a Labour Alliance government was elected on policies that seemed to signal a “Third Way” approach (Codd, 2002; Olssen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004; Zepke 2009)—seeking to reconcile neoliberal and social democratic ideologies and create a socialized market economy. The Tertiary Education Advisory Commission was established by the government and one of its early tasks was to undertake a review of postcompulsory education, including ACE.

The government acknowledged the role of ACE as a public as well as a private good and stated its desire to sponsor a collaborative approach to rebuilding the ACE sector. An Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party was set up with representation from nationally active ACE practitioners. It undertook consultations with the ACE sector and the result of its work was Koia! Koia! Towards a Learning Society (Tertiary Education Commission [TEC], 2001). This report defined ACE and outlined a vision for its future. In addition to advancing skill-related and remedial aims, the government’s priorities for ACE sought to encourage lifelong learning and to strengthen social and community life through education.

Central to this vision were “ownership” by the sector, greater coordination of provision, the implementation of “quality” measures, and sector capability building through professional development. The “carrot” of funding was dangled to encourage sector practitioners to work together through regional ACE networks, which were to be established across the country. The networks were charged with coordinating provision to meet local needs and help develop and implement quality systems and professional...
development plans. The "stick" was the suggestion that only those ACE organizations that attended regional network meetings would gain funding for their work.

The TEC, which was established as an arm of the Ministry of Education in 2003, was charged with responsibility for policy and funding in the whole postcompulsory education sector. This, in theory, gave ACE equal standing alongside other, larger and higher profile groupings in postschool education, including polytechnics, universities, and industrial training organizations. Nonaccredited education was publicly recognized as having a place within the wider tertiary sector. Māori, and to a lesser extent Pasifika, voices also made themselves heard, laying out their own agenda for ACE, based on self-determination, self-organization, and distinctive conceptions of knowledge, learning, and teaching (Irwin, 2008; Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008).

But increased, secure, and equitable funding proved an illusion. Nor was the tendency to instrumentalism substantially modified. Although there was policy recognition of the "distinctive contribution" of each part of the tertiary education sector, including ACE (TEC, 2007), the overall thrust was meeting the needs of industry through training, linking research to economic opportunities, and improving workforce literacy and numeracy.

There were gains and losses for the ACE sector in this period. The formation of regional networks might have proved to be a gain, had they not appeared to be imposed from above and had there been clarity about their purpose and a sense of independence from government. However, members of these networks often expressed confusion about their role and function (Bowl, 2007, 2009), although recruitment to preexisting independent ACE Aotearoa branches was adversely affected. Networks of surveillance and accountability (Tobias, 2004; Zepke, 2009) arguably undermined autonomous organization among ACE practitioners. The test of the new networks was likely to be their ability to demonstrate solidarity in protecting the ACE sector if faced with the kind of threat to its existence that it had experienced in the 1980s and early 1990s.

**Trying Times**

A change of government, an economic downturn, and the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideas on education policy have signaled renewed trouble for ACE in Aotearoa. At the end of 2008, after 9 years in power, the Labour-led government was ousted in a general election and replaced by a center-right coalition led by the National Party. One of the new government's first acts was to reduce staffing within the TEC (part of whose role was to monitor and support the development of ACE) and to subject the ACE sector to a substantial funding cut in the name of economic stringency and revised priorities. These new priorities stressed a strongly instrumentalist view of the role and purpose of government subsidized education and training for adults, linked literacy to employment and increased productivity rather than personal or social enhancement (New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education, 2010) and promoted a "user pays" approach to adult education. There was a spirited defense on the part of sections of the ACE sector, manifested through local and national rallies, political
lobbying, and through new web-based campaigning methods. However, it did not prevent the cuts being implemented and there is evidence of a downturn in ACE activity, particularly in schools.

Across the globe, education is being reshaped in the context of neoliberalism (Ball et al., 2003; Bourdieu, 1998). But until recently in Aotearoa New Zealand, in spite of the challenges of the 1980s and 1990s, there has been some effective resistance to its dominance in adult education. The historical and cultural context and the struggles of committed activists have sustained a consensus that adult education should have social, political, and cultural, as well as individual and economic purposes. This consensus is under challenge. It is therefore pertinent to ask what lessons the past may offer us in trying to secure a future for a broad vision of adult education in testing times in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere.

Lessons From History

Adult educators tend to shy away from critical analysis of the philosophy and politics of adult education, focusing instead on the practical demands of sustaining specific areas of provision. However, Coben (1998, p.5) suggests that this “theoretical weakness” can leave practitioners vulnerable to ideologically driven attacks on their work and funding. This vulnerability has been evident in the United Kingdom, where publicly subsidized and community-based adult education has been drastically cut back in recent years. Conversely, the tendency for adult education theory and theorists to be distanced from the immediate concerns of practitioners and adult learners has also been noted (Brookfield, 2005; Crowther, Galloway, & Martin, 2005). Brookfield, following Gramsci (1971), argues, however, that “we are all theorists” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 10) who need to make meaning, to explain, to predict, and to pursue solutions to problems.

A consideration of theory alongside practice may be particularly helpful in the current climate, in which taken-for-granted assumptions of neoliberalism pervade government policy discourse (Bourdieu, 1998; Harvey, 2007; Mayo, 1999). In the final sections of the article, we draw lessons of practice (action) and theory (reflection) from the history of adult education in Aotearoa New Zealand with the aim of achieving praxis (Allman, 1999, 2001; Freire 1972, 1973; Gramsci, 1971). Critical praxis: “informed, committed action” based on alliances between practitioners, academics, and others committed to a progressive vision of education for democracy and equality. And although education alone may not stem the ideological tide, we argue that it can be put to work in the interests of a more just social order.

Action: Lessons From Practice

A historical analysis of the struggles of adult educators and community activists offers a number of insights from practice. First, it suggests that, even in difficult times, it is possible to maintain, or even gain, ground. The activism of the 1980s and 1990s for Māori language education and against nuclear armament and apartheid seems to
demonstrate the possibilities for informal education based on action outside the parameters of the state and the potential of such action to promote learning (Foley, 1999).

Second, although state support remains important in developing adult education provision, making it accessible to a wider section of the population, there may be a price to pay if it also implies co-option into regimes of compliance as a condition of funding (Mayo, 1999). The experience of practitioners working within government-imposed regional ACE networks in the period of the 1999-2008 Labour Alliance government provides an example of the difficulties of engaging with government policy without a clear and critical understanding of the implications of doing so. The current decline of these networks under a new governing regime is evidence of their fragility. Although the experience of history reaffirms the importance of fighting for public funding, it also suggests the need for adult educators to maintain autonomous organizational structures outside the parameters of the state and unencumbered by demands to meet priorities imposed from above.

Third, our historical analysis illustrates the value of alliances between adult educators and other progressive groups and organizations. Movements for peace, equality, and democracy, such as those described in the 1970s, have gone hand in hand with educational activity (Allman, 1999, 2001). The educational potential of these movements may not necessarily be recognized as such by providers of formal, institution-based education. Arguably, in Aotearoa New Zealand, too, great an emphasis on ACE as a “sector” has isolated it from possible allies in the wider educational field, in community development, and in environmental, labor, and other progressive movements. Broad-based alliances at local and national levels may be more effective than reactive campaigns in advancing popular adult education as a part of the struggle for a more just and peaceful society.

Reflection: Lessons From Theory

Crowther et al. (2005) have discussed the importance of theoretical analysis in popular education, rooted in the concerns of ordinary people and directed toward political and social change. In this regard, the work of Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972, 1973) has been particularly influential in suggesting political and pedagogical lessons for adult educators (Allman, 2001; Coben, 1998; Mayo, 1999).

Politically, the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) is useful in exploring the circumstances in which adult education finds itself under attack. Hegemony describes the way in which prevailing power relations are maintained through inculcating dominant values, beliefs, norms, and discourses, which come to be viewed as “common sense.” The hegemonic discourse around education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and elsewhere, can be discerned in government emphasis on competition, marketability, privatization, flexibility, and retrenchment (New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education, 2010). In the field of adult education, the discourse of skills training for prosperity and employability and of fiscal stringency in times of economic uncertainty has come to be regarded as a commonsense discourse (Gramsci, 1971) and, as such, remains largely
uncontested. Through a critical lens, however, policy decisions to redirect resources away from broadly based adult education, in the name of "targeted" funding, may be seen as cover for a neoliberal agenda—which is indeed contestable. Esland (1990), Coffield (1999, 2000), Avis (2007), and others offer evidence-based arguments that refute the assertions underpinning the narrowing of education to an economic and instrumentalist endeavor. Likewise, the notion that there is no alternative to public sector cutbacks can be disputed (Fisher, 2009; Public and Commercial Services Union, 2010). However, given the pervasive nature of neoliberal ideas, the evidence-based counterarguments are unlikely to be located in policy pronouncements or in "popular" media editorials, but in the publications of the labor movement and critics of capitalism (Fisher, 2009; Grayson & Rutherford, 2010; Little, 2010). A reading of these oppositional texts suggests that, contrary to commonsense belief, there are alternatives to slashing public spending and that the revitalization of progressive alliances is vital to achieving a new consensus, which is not solely based on economic priorities (Hall & Massey, 2010).

Recognition of the operation of hegemony in relation to adult education opens up the possibility of counterhegemonic action and enables one to argue, not about the size of the funding cake, or the slice that goes to adult education, but about the nature and ownership of the cake itself. This has pedagogical implications. For Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972, 1973) as well as for Foley (1999) and Allman (2001), transformative adult education is a vehicle for unmasking dominant ideologies and questioning taken-for-granted assumptions. The role of adult educators and their allies is to provide the conditions for adults to reflect on their past and present experiences, placing it in a wider historical, social, and political context, identifying those "limit situations" (Freire 1972, p.71) that are obstacles to progressive change, but which can be changed through collective action.

Principles of critical pedagogy—dialogue and democracy (Allman, 2001; Brookfield, 2005; Foley, 1999; Freire, 1972; hooks, 2003)—can be applied to all adult educational contexts. In social movements, they may be implicit, and the value and potential of informal learning may not be fully realized (Foley, 1999). In more formal educational environments they may be constrained by the imposition of standardized curricular and assessment regimes and by the expectations of students. But regardless of setting, we suggest that these principles can be translated into pedagogical practices.

Freire's (1972) critique of banking education and his exposition of a dialogic approach resonates with many adult educators. In practice, however, the tendency to didacticism is tempting. First, it may replicate the adult educator's own educational experiences and therefore seem more natural and comfortable. Second, learners accustomed to didactic teaching in other settings may resist adult educators' attempts to create a dialogic environment. The educator therefore has actively to challenge student resistance to discussion. This requires the educator to be assertive and can provoke initial discomfort and discontent on the part of learners. Third, in larger scale educational environments with prescribed outcomes and assessment regimes, there are practical difficulties in achieving dialogue, including lack of time and the narrow focus of the curriculum.
However, it is rarely impossible. There are spaces within adult education for the exercise of agency. Adult educators are still less constrained than school-based teachers; they retain some leeway to encourage discussion beyond the immediate context of a prescriptive national curriculum. Through consciously fostering a questioning approach, the culture of silence (Freire, 1972) and uncritical acceptance of common-sense assumptions can be undermined.

The idea of democracy in education runs counter to the ethos of care and control that characterizes much of compulsory schooling. However, as hooks (2003) suggests, democratic relationships between learners and teachers can be achieved, particularly in adult education, enabling the educator to reject authoritarianism, while remaining authoritative. In adult and community-based education both learner and teacher have personal, social, political, and economic experience and understanding to bring to the learning environment—commonsense experience, which may be explained, explored, and critiqued. Adult educators who "teach beyond the classroom" (hooks 2003, p. 43) do so by sharing information and ideas about the world as it is experienced outside the classroom and by engaging in real-world struggles alongside learners who are also members of families, communities, and social, political, and labor movement organizations.

Adult education can either domesticate or promote dialogue and contribute to the development of a critique of the status quo; it can open up debate and create a climate for change. It can question "common-sense" assumptions and draw out "good sense," evidence-based understanding. It can nurture critical as well as functional literacy—the ability to read the "world as well as the word" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The argument for adult education is not just an argument about the economic, health, or welfare benefits of participation. It is an argument that takes into account the potential diversity of people’s learning interests, which recognizes the value of overtly critical forms of education and action as well as those forms that are directed toward supporting people in their everyday interests, which may relate to work, to leisure, or to contributing to an informed and democratically engaged society.

Conclusions: Praxis

An analysis of the history of adult education in Aotearoa New Zealand is fruitful for drawing out some of the lessons from practice, which could inform future action in defense of adult education beyond the boundaries of one country. A consideration of theory provides adult educators with the tools for progressive political and pedagogical practice. Gramsci's description of hegemony, "common sense" and "good sense" enables the unmasking of neoliberal ideologies and their influence on adult education policy and practice. Freire's (1972) discussion of critical pedagogy, elaborated by others (Allman, 1999, 2001; Brookfield, 2005; Foley, 1999; hooks, 2003), suggests practical approaches to engaging learners beyond the immediate concerns of day-to-day experience. The struggle to reclaim social and political purpose for adult education rests with adult educators and learners working together and in alliances with progressive
organizations. It is fostered in popular campaigns and debates. It is sustained through preserving, analyzing, and presenting the lessons from history and through making visible the contradictions and injustices of current policies.

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