

UNIT 13: HANDOUT A

EXERCISE 3

WHEN DOES A PRIVATE TROUBLE BECOME A PUBLIC ISSUE?

C. Wright Mills, a sociologist writing in 1959, explained how he saw the difference between a personal trouble and a public issue, and how structural influences made an impact on the individual.

He said that personal troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his or her immediate relations with others. They have to do with our own selves and our everyday life. These troubles are a private matter and they are usually resolved at this level.

He felt that public issues have to do with matters that are wider than this immediate private life. They are concerned with the ways in which all the many aspects of society are organised. Sometimes, public issues which need tackling by government are re-defined as private troubles.

For example, if an Asian patient in hospital needs a vegetarian diet because of cultural or religious beliefs, this might be interpreted as a personal trouble or frustration, to be solved by the patient's family bringing in food for them to eat. The public issue is about the right for all to have access to appropriate food while in hospital, and about who services are planned for in a multicultural population.

Source: C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959.



UNIT 13: HANDOUT B

EXERCISE 4

PRINCIPLES OF POPULAR EDUCATION

(Adapted from 'Training for Transformation')

► Levels of thinking

1st level (Magical) where people feel inferior to facts or events which have been commanded by a superior force or power (e.g. fate, destiny, God).

2nd level (Naïve) where people tend to simplify problems, go by appearances and accept ideas without questioning them.

3rd level (Critical) where people seek to go into, go under, go to the roots of, unveil, investigate and test their findings.

► No education is ever neutral

Education is either designed to maintain the existing situation (keep people in their place) or it is designed to free people (help them become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of society).



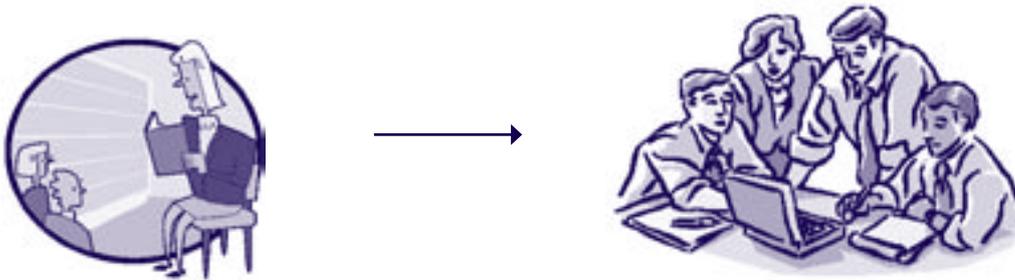
► Relevance

People will act on the issues on which they have strong feelings. All projects should start by identifying the issues which the local people speak about with excitement, hope, fear, anxiety, or anger in order to tap into the energy of the community.



► **Problem-posing**

From the start, all who take part are recognised as thinking, creative people with the capacity for action. The aim of the learning is to help them identify things they wish to change, identify the problems and the root causes of these problems, and work out practical ways to effect change. This is contrasted with the old 'banking approach' to education based on the transmission of information from teacher to pupil.



► **Dialogue**

Education is seen as a 2-way learning process. The role of the teacher/tutor is to set up a situation in which a genuine exchange can take place – where each shares their experience, listens to and learns from, the others.

► **Reflection and Action**

Most real learning and change takes place when a community experiences dissatisfaction with some aspect of their present life. The educator can provide a situation where people stop, reflect upon what they are doing, identify any new information or skills that they need, get this information and training and plan action.

