

Manifesto for critical adult education

These theses are addressed to all those who take seriously the mission and the possibility of adult education to contribute to a society that enables a good life for all.

In today's social conditions, the capitalist economy determines the entire social life. The logic of markets and the overruling concept of growth as well as a performance orientation permeates all areas of life. We live in times in which governments spread fear, become dependent on globalised capital and make people the object of economic relations. We are confronted with a decline in solidarity and an increase in the systematic erosion of humanistic and social values. Responsibilities are being individualised, increasing competition is shaping social life and thus the conditions of education, learning and teaching.

Based on the outlined initial situation, we name our basic understanding of critical adult education:

1. We share a basic attitude that places people at the centre of our work; this means that instead of propagating exclusion and competition this attitude should enable learners to cooperate, act together and show global solidarity.
2. We stand for adult education that serves the development of the critical potentials of all and the development of a society based on solidarity.
3. We advocate adult education that enables people to shape their own lives and social conditions consciously.
4. We fight for adult education that promotes creative, cultural and political education and is not oriented towards commercial exploitability.

In the sense of a critical adult education understood in this way, we orient ourselves on principles that guide our actions:

5. We pursue the idea of adult education that encourages people to recognize the impositions of social power relations, to question them, to take a conscious stand and to defend themselves. This requires measures for the development of self-determination and co-determination and, furthermore, reflective and socially critical educational contents that reveal connections and strengthen global solidarity in thinking and acting.

6. We want to contribute to a vibrant democracy and a good life for all, including in particular active commitment to socially disadvantaged people and groups. Central elements of critical adult education are, for instance, (self-) reflective confrontations with gender hierarchies and racist power relations.
7. We advocate an entanglement of science and practice in order to secure the autonomy of adult education as a whole, and to achieve the necessary influence to implement our concerns.
8. We assume that critical adult education must deal and cope with uncertainties, discontinuities and contradictions. The inherent cracks of this process open spaces for thought and action for necessary visions, utopias and alternatives. They make it possible for adult education to resist strategies of domination that repeatedly adapt to the circumstances.

As critical adult education, we take a stand:

9. We resist being instrumental as an extended arm of state repression. Individual educational success or non-success must not be the basis of state sanctions.
10. We defend ourselves against any kind of starvation of critical education, in particular against the financial cuts of feminist and gender-reflected education and research.
11. We will be visible and loud and provide an impetus for an "education movement" that strongly opposes the neoliberal erosion of educational content, and the reduction of education to a commodity.

**Whoever can agree to this manifesto and wants to support it,
may it become your own and spread.**

This manifesto was presented during the 10th event of the series
"The dark side of adult education"
and subsequently formulated in an action group.

St. Wolfgang, Strobl, Vienna and Graz, May 2019