Introduction to Popular Education Principles

**OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Identify key principles and methods of popular education

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Before the session, review the resource, An Introduction to Population Education, and the facilitator’s notes for the slides. Review the handout, Introduction to Popular Education, and write each principle of popular education on an index card for the activity.

2. Welcome participants. Provide an overview of popular education (slide 1).

3. Review “Basic Principles of Cooperative Learning” (slide 2). Ask volunteers to read the slide.

4. Review “Cooperative Learning Roles” (slide 3). Ask for volunteers to read the slide.

5. Facilitate Principles of Popular Education activity.
   - Divide participants into small groups of four to five people each.
   - Distribute the “principles of popular education” index cards.
   - Ask participants to read the principle they received, and discuss in their groups how they could present the principle in a creative way, using a skit, song, drawing, etc. They can think about how the principles apply to their work.
   - Give groups 15 minutes to work on their presentations.
   - Have each group present their principle.
   - Ask, “Is there anything else anyone would like to add to the information that has been shared?”

6. Wrap up.
   - Distribute the “Introduction to Popular Education” and “House of Popular Education” handouts to the group.
   - Reference the Popular Education manual.
   - Thank participants for their presentations.

**Related C3 Roles**

Building individual and community capacity, providing culturally appropriate health education and information

**Related C3 Skills**

Communication skills, interpersonal and relationship-building skills, capacity building skills, advocacy skills, education and facilitation skills

**Method(s) of Instruction**

Small group work

**Estimated time**

40 minutes

**Key Concepts**

Popular education, cooperative learning

**Materials**

- Computer with internet access and projector
- PowerPoint slides
- Index cards

**Handouts**

- Introduction to Popular Education
- House of Popular Education

**Resources**

An Introduction to Popular Education manual: [https://multco.us/file/16372/download](https://multco.us/file/16372/download)
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SLIDE 1

Popular education has a long history of being used all over the world to train Community Health Workers. One of the goals of popular education (PE) is to motivate people to organize collectively to create a truly democratic society. But many people, maybe most people, have not had much experience working collectively.

Therefore, two additional principles of PE are:

1. People know a lot and we should always start with what people already know
2. We need to create situations where people can learn the skills they need to work collectively

An excellent method for helping people build the skills they need to work together is cooperative learning.

SLIDE 2

Ask a volunteer to read the slide.

SLIDE 3

Ask a volunteer to read the slide.
What is popular education?
Popular education is a philosophy and methodology of teaching and community organizing. It has many sources. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian, is the person best known for his contribution to popular education.

What are the goals of popular education?
- The creation of a truly democratic society where we all have equal access to the world’s resources
- Human liberation, both personal and collective

How does popular education propose to achieve its goals?¹

Step 1: Help each person come to believe that they are capable of changing their world.
Step 2: Connect people’s personal problems to national and global realities (develop critical consciousness).
Step 3: Motivate people to organize collectively and take action to resolve their common problems.

What are the principles of popular education?²
- The current distribution of the world’s resources is unjust and change is possible.
- We learn with our heads, our hearts, and our bodies.
- It is important to create an atmosphere of trust so that people can share their ideas and experiences.
- We all know a lot. As educators and organizers, we should always start with what people already know and/or do.
- The knowledge we gain through life experience is as important as the knowledge we gain through formal education.
- People should be active participants in their own learning process. They should not be passive recipients.
- Knowledge is constructed in the interaction between people.
- Popular education is an inclusive movement that combines influences from many sources.

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In each situation in which we try to teach or organize, the conditions should reflect the conditions of the society we are trying to construct. This means equality between “teacher” and “student,” and democratic decision-making.

- It is important that educators and organizers share the life experience of those they want to teach and/or organize.
- The arts (music, drama, visual arts, etc.) are important tools for teaching and organizing.
- The purpose of developing a critical consciousness is to be able to take action to change the world. (Critical thinking alone is not enough.)
- The goal of popular education is organized action to change the world.

What are some of the values of popular education?3

- Love for the cause of the people
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Responsibility
- Dedication
- Solidarity
- Humility
- Comradeship/Compañerismo


3 Harnecker, Marta (2002). Sin tierra: Construyendo movimiento social. (Landless: Constructing a social movement.) Madrid, Spain: Siglo XXI de España Editores
The House of Popular Education (Wiggins and Rios, 2007)

The Goal:
A Just, Equal, and Truly Democratic Society

As educator/organizers, we must be humble and learn from our colleagues.

- Based on our expanded understanding, we need to organize with others to change the world.
- We need opportunities to connect our personal experience to national and global realities.
- We need opportunities to reflect on our personal experience and identify community problems.
- Feelings and emotions are an important part of learning. We learn with head, heart, and body.
  - We learn more when we are having fun!
- We need to create situations where people can learn the skills they need to work collectively.
- People should be active participants (not passive recipients) in their own learning process.
  - We all know a lot. We should always start with what people know and do.
- It is important to create an atmosphere of trust so people can share their ideas and experiences.
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Acknowledgments

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