

## Invited Article

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# *Professionalization for What? Fulfilling the Promise of Adult and Continuing Education*

**Ronald M. Cervero**

### Abstract

This article summarizes the history of the professionalization debate and explains why professionalization is even more important in 2017 as adult and continuing education is moving from the margins to the mainstream of social, cultural, economic, and political life. As I have argued since 1987, the professionalization project enables us to fulfil the promise of adult education, creating hope and opportunity and improving the material conditions of people's lives. However, the field now faces challenges as the political economy of higher education provides a new environment that poses an existential threat to our graduate programs. Our graduate programs must continue to exist and thrive so that we can prepare graduates for the workforce, thus continuing to professionalize our field. To this end, I recommend that leaders of graduate programs use organizational strategies that respond to higher education's new political economic context to include a focus on faculty hiring practices, research productivity, access and completion of academic programs, partnerships and outreach, and internal and external public relations.



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### Background and Purpose

In the very first issue of the *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, Malcolm Knowles was asked to speculate about adult education in the year 2000. In his article, "Let Me Dream a Little," Knowles (1992) articulated an enduring perspective about the professionalization of the field:

What kind of personnel would be the most effective in serving this expanded field? What should be the role of professional training and certification? From its beginning as an organized movement, adult education has been blessed by diversity of its personnel. A relatively small cadre of highly trained professionals has evolved whose primary function has been to provide training to a much larger body of part-time paid and volunteer practitioners drawn from every segment of society. This diversity has been a chief source of adult education's vitality, richness, and success. My own view is that attempts to homogenize the personnel of the field by imposing standardized entrance requirements and certification and licensing procedures should be resisted and in-service educational opportunities optimized. (pp. 11-12)

Knowles was representing a tradition of adult education that stretches back to the 1919 Report (British Ministry of Education, 1919) calling for adult education to play a central role in society. I agree with this larger vision and have consistently argued (Cervero, 1987; Cervero, 1989; Cervero, 1992) that our professionalization project must be shaped to fulfill the promise of adult and continuing education.

In the same year that the *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning* came into existence, I published a chapter titled "Adult and Continuing Education Should Strive for Professionalization" that concluded:

It is my hope that the field can move beyond the issue of whether it should professionalize. Adult education has answered this question by engaging in the process of awarding credentials through higher education institutions. Instead, attention should be focused on the issue of which models of professionalization should be followed. Professionalization should recognize that different (and to some extent competing) purposes, knowledge, and ideologies underlie the work of adult educators. The very least we can do is to ensure that

these differences are represented in the content of graduate training programs. (Cervero, 1992, p. 48)

My views on the desirability of professionalizing adult education have been highly influenced by extensive work with other professions, particularly in the health fields (Cervero, 1988; Cervero & Daley, 2016). I have seen how pre-licensure professional education programs prepare students for a wide range of roles that serve very different social purposes. Thus, over the past 25 years I have argued consistently that our professionalization project should be based on the vision that adult education is about the struggle for knowledge and power in society (Cervero, Wilson, & Associates, 2001; Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Merriam, Courtenay, & Cervero, 2006).

Gary Dean has edited the PAACE journal since its inception in 1992, and over these past 25 years, the journal has grown into a highly respected journal with an international readership. In the invitation to reflect on where we have been and where we are going as a field, the editors said they were inspired by the New Directions volume, *Fulfilling the Promise of Adult and Continuing Education* (Quigley, 1989a). As the title of this article indicates, I have tied together the purpose of professionalization with my vision and hopes for the field of adult and continuing education. As I have argued since 1987, the professionalization project enables us to fulfil the promise of adult education, creating hope and opportunity and improving the material conditions of people's lives. This article first looks back, summarizing the history of the professionalization debate that I provided 25 years ago (Cervero, 1992). Secondly, I explain why professionalization is even more important in 2017 as adult education is moving from the margins to the mainstream of social, cultural, economic, and political life. Thirdly, I address the question posed in the title, "Professionalization for What?," with a discussion of the vision and principles that should animate our profession. In the final two sections, I speculate on the future of further professionalization of adult and continuing education.

### **(Re)Framing the Professionalization of Adult and Continuing Education**

In the concluding chapter to the book on "Fulfilling the Promise of Adult and Continuing Education," Quigley (1989b) provided the historical perspective for how the field has framed the professionalization

debate. He drew on Cotton (1964) who identified two traditions, “social reformist” and “professional,” which are seen as incompatible with each other. The social reformist tradition was composed of “idealism, moral enthusiasm, and intellectual vigor” (Cotton, 1964, p. 84) and stemmed from the 1919 Report in Britain. The professional tradition developed in the 1930s and arose, “at least partially, in reaction against the social reformist orientation...repudiating the utopianism of the social reformist tradition” (p. 84). Quigley believed these traditions still persisted, did not see the dichotomy in our discourse being eliminated, and asked if the field would see one tradition more fully supporting and informing the other. This dichotomy between social reformist and professional traditions has a good deal of support among other prominent adult educators (Collins, 1992; Cunningham, 2000).

As Collins (1992) argued in “Adult and Continuing Education Should Resist Further Professionalization”: “in the quest for professionalization, we lose the meaning of adult education” (p. 37). He believes that we need competent practitioners, but that the real goal of the professionalization project is to create a monopoly for the services of adult educators. He argues that the regulatory procedures of professionalization, such as licensing, certification, and accreditation do not actually guarantee competent practice, but rather are about the exercise of control. He argues the position, consistent with Cotton’s, that technocratic rationality and technique are the focus of professionalization and that we should resist this tradition and “align our pedagogical commitments and curriculum more relevantly with the struggles of ordinary men and women” (p. 42). Of course, Collins wrote this chapter as a tenured professor in an adult and continuing education graduate program, awarding degrees to students who would use their credentials to secure employment in the labor market.

Without a doubt, Phyllis Cunningham was the most forceful advocate for the social reformist tradition until her death in 2012. She was a persistent critic of professionalization, arguing that adult educators should be committed to the ideals of social justice to create a better world in the same tradition as Cotton’s idealism and utopianism. Although the logo on the website of the Phyllis Cunningham Archive is “Equality for All,” that is entirely too abstract to name her contributions to the field of adult education as Cunningham always connected her ideals to work on the ground. In her own words, she provided a metaphor that is much more connected to the physical world: spacemaker. Although social equality was her vision, she was always about spacemaking for

others (Cervero & Merriam, 2007). Unlike others, then, she embraced the contradiction of making these arguments from the place of a tenured university professor. She dealt with this contradiction directly, writing in the last sentence of her autobiography, "As a professor in my later years, to help build a program that opened up space for others is my greatest accomplishment, and in doing so, others have been encouraged to be spacemakers as well" (Cunningham, 2007). The "others" is an explicit reference to the students of color for whom she was a champion and who were enrolled in her graduate program of adult and continuing education at Northern Illinois University. Thus, she used a mechanism of professionalization, awarding credentials for use on the labor market, to further her ideal of social equality.

In the tradition that Cunningham represents, we argued that "only by challenging the power relations in graduate programs in adult education can we begin to challenge racism and sexism in the professionalization of adult education" (Johnson-Bailey, Tisdell, & Cervero, 1994, p. 74). We believe that "Professionalization is simply another mechanism by which social power is distributed in society, and all existing asymmetrical power relationships among different races and between men and women are reproduced (often in complex and subtle ways) through this process" (p. 65). We agreed with Cunningham that change is possible and offered strategies to change these power relations by challenging what counts as knowledge in the curriculum, introducing teaching methods that can challenge racism and sexism, and by hiring faculty who represent feminist and Afrocentric backgrounds. In a more recent article in the *PAACE* journal, Bierema (2011) aligns with these positions and urges the field to cross boundaries and engage these issues directly, concluding that "professionalization holds great promise for attaining this vision" (p. 34).

I have argued for many years that the framing of professionalization in contrast to the "social reformist" tradition is a false dichotomy and not consistent with what we know from the professionalization of other occupations (Cervero, 1987; Cervero, 1992). I arrived at this position through my work with other professions, which demonstrated that while members of a profession receive standardized training, they use this common background for different social purposes. The assumption that professions are best understood as communities united by common interests is a myth; they are more accurately described as "loose amalgamations of segments pursuing different objectives and more or less held

together under a common name at a particular period of history” (Bucher & Strauss, 1961, p. 326). For example, some clergy see their functions as ensuring the personal salvation of their congregation, while others work out of the liberation theology tradition that seeks to improve the material conditions of people’s lives. Some physicians refuse to serve the poor and elderly because of limited reimbursement through Medicaid and Medicare, while others work in free clinics for these members of society. Just as in any other occupation, we see graduates of adult and continuing education degree programs serving different social goals, ranging from advocates in progressive movements to trainers in private equity firms. Thus, like Cunningham, I have focused my efforts on opening spaces for people with different social agendas and experiences in graduate programs.

As a basis of my reframing the issue, I turned to the work of sociological theorists (Freidson, 1986; Larson, 1977) who showed that modern movements toward professionalization are linked to the rise of industrial capitalism. Within this emergent social order, occupations had to create a market for their services and claim special privileges for those who provided these services. Importantly, the unit of analysis is the occupation of adult education because individuals do not professionalize, occupations do. Larson (1977) argues that professionalization is the process by which producers of special services constitute and control the market for their services. For this professional market to exist, a distinctive commodity must be produced. Unlike industrial labor, professions produce intangible goods in that their products are inextricably bound to the people who produce them. Therefore, the producers themselves have to be developed if their products (i.e., the professional) are to be given a distinctive form. Specifically, professionals have to be trained and socialized so as to provide recognizably distinct services for exchange on the professional market. In order to provide such distinct services, the profession must have a recognizable distinct and standardized knowledge base that is taught to new members. This comes together in higher education where the production of knowledge and the production of practitioners are united in the same structure. The model of research and training institutionalized by the modern university gives professions the means to control the knowledge base and award credentials certifying that practitioners possess this distinct type of knowledge. The achievement of any profession’s socially recognized expertise is therefore necessarily connected to a system of education and credentialing.

Given this definition, the level of an occupation's professionalization can be assessed by the extent to which its credentials are accepted as necessary to provide a specific type of service. I concluded (Cervero, 1992) that, except for the professoriate, adult educators have not managed to constitute and control the market for their services in any subfield of practice. While the question of professionalization is interesting to debate, it is really a nonissue as a practical matter. For unless all graduate programs in the field were dismantled, adult education will continue to constitute and control the market of their services by producing certified adult educators. The process of professionalization began eighty years ago with the establishment of degree programs at Columbia University and the University of Chicago. This process is a function of pervasive social, political and economic forces inherent to capitalist societies (Freidson, 1986; Larson, 1977). While we can make a decision as individuals about whether to participate in this process, it is difficult to imagine any other alternative we have as an occupation. In alignment with Cunningham (2007) and Johnson-Bailey, Tisdell, and Cervero (1994) who seek to reform graduate education in the field, I believe we should accept our involvement in the process of professionalization and focus on the more important issue of how to shape the professionalization of adult education.

### **Why Professionalization Matters Even More in 2017**

The education of adults has played an active role in the ongoing constitution of social, economic, political, and cultural life since the beginning of human history. The recognition of these activities' importance and their being brought together into a field of educational practice, however, had to wait until the 1920s. As signalled by the creation of the American Association for Adult Education in 1926 and the vision of leaders such as Lindeman and Locke, adult education was seen as an important means of bringing "democratic participation to adults who throughout their lifespan struggle to participate in social and economic decisions affecting them" (Heaney, 1996, p. 5). Over the past ninety years, the varied institutions of society from local community-based organizations to multinational corporations have increasingly turned to adult education to fashion a society in terms of their own interests and values. As Budd Hall, an astute observer of worldwide adult education notes,

The formal structures of adult education reach literally tens of millions of adults throughout the world in a complex and intricate variety of adult education offerings ... Aside from the formal channels of media communication, the combined network of adult education structures reach a larger proportion of the world's population than any other single form of communication (Hall, 1997, p. 18).

It is clear now that adult and continuing education has moved to a central position in the constitution of social life, and thus the professionalization of the field matters more than ever. Although adult and continuing education has always been an expression of the wider processes of social change, its widespread use by institutions of the state, the market, and civil society has highlighted the need for adult educators to provide leadership for these activities. We know that adult education has a role in the distribution not only of knowledge but also of social, cultural, and economic power. If adult education did not have these material effects, no one would care very much about it. Would employers spend billions of dollars if training did not have a demonstrable effect on the economic and social life of workplaces? Would thousands of *campesinos* in El Salvador have educated themselves through popular education unless they saw its connection to political struggle and transformation? Can presidents of higher education institutions be immune to wider political-economic changes in society when the majority of their students are over 25 years of age (Sandmann, 2010)?

As these examples illustrate, adult education cannot be a neutral activity in the continual struggle for knowledge and power in society. This is hardly a new idea, as we have always recognized that the policies, practices, and institutions of adult education are caught up in the conflicts and constitutions of our economic, cultural, social, and political systems (Cervero, Wilson, & Associates, 2001; Cunningham, 2000). The important question is not whether adult education is connected to these conflicts and processes, but how and why. These questions require a relational analysis that accepts that adult education does not stand above the unequal relations of power that structure the wider social systems (Apple, 1990). As the foregoing examples show, the practices of adult education are not only structured by these relations, but also play a role in reproducing or changing them. Thus, we need to take as a starting point that:



education represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. Thus, education becomes the central terrain where power and politics operate out of the lived culture of individuals and groups situated in asymmetrical social and political positions. (Mohanty, 1994, p. 147)

This relational view requires us to ask the timeless political question about our adult education efforts: Who benefits? Tied to this question is the ethical one: Who should benefit? The increasing importance of adult education in the constitution of social, political, economic, and cultural life demands no less.

### **Professionalization for What?**

I have mapped out a framework for how the field should link our professionalization project to fulfilling the promise of adult and continuing education (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). In that book (Cervero, Wilson, & Associates, 2001), we proposed three starting points that, linked together, provide a map for preparing students in our adult and continuing education graduate programs. These starting points are: 1) there is a reciprocal relationship between power and adult education, 2) adult education is a site of struggle for knowledge and power, and 3) all adult educators practice with a social vision.

#### ***Reciprocal Relationship Between Power and Adult Education.***

This relationship is reciprocal in that the effects go in both directions. In one direction, the social, economic, political, and cultural power relations that structure action in the world are played out in adult education. These systems of power are almost always asymmetrical, privileging some people and disadvantaging others. This is true for any policy, program, or practice of adult education, such as a national policy for lifelong learning, a continuing medical education course, a program on adult literacy, or an anti-racism workshop for community leaders. In a real sense, the power relations that structure our lives together do not stop at the doors of our adult education classrooms. In the other direction, our educational efforts always play a role in maintaining or reconstructing these systems of power. Power relations are never static but are continually reproduced or reshaped, thus providing more or fewer life chances for the adults affected by a program, practice, or policy. Thus,

power relations both provide the grounds for action in adult education and are always acted on by adult education (Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Giddens, 1979). This premise means that adult learners exist in structurally defined hierarchies and enter adult education marked by their location within systems of power and privilege that have shaped their experiences. Adult educators also enter educational practice as participants in the systems of power and privilege, and their actions are enabled and constrained by their place in these systems.

***Adult Education is a Site of Struggle for Knowledge and Power.***

If power relations provide the ground for action, then politics “is concerned with the means of producing, reproducing, consuming, and accumulating material and symbolic resources” (Morrow & Torres, 1995, p. 464). Once we have defined adult education relationally within the wider society and economy, we must then locate it “on the ground” in the material world. Foley explains that power is “continually contested, so history may be seen as a continual struggle by ordinary people to maintain or extend control over their lives” (1993, p. 23). Adult education’s role in history, then, should be understood as a struggle for knowledge, which is intertwined with the struggle for power. These struggles are the engines that drive adult education and are central to practice on the ground. Adult literacy educators and leaders have always understood that they are engaged in this struggle. By providing opportunities for learners to improve their literacy skills, oral and written English skills, and earn the GED credential, they are offering these same learners the chance for social mobility through better jobs and a better life. Many educators provide these learning opportunities in programs that are situated in parent organizations that may not always provide the necessary resources to support the literacy program. So in this struggle to make a space for the literacy program in the larger organization, they are making a space for their learners to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in life.

If these struggles define the politics of adult education, then negotiation is the central metaphor for practice (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Cervero & Wilson, 2006). It is out of these struggles that the purpose, content, and audience for adult education are negotiated. The view that adult education is a site of struggle for knowledge and power recognizes that multiple interests are at stake in any adult education activity. Because adult education produces multiple benefits for multiple people, there is almost always conflict among the people who are affected by an

adult education policy, program, or practice. Sometimes these conflicts are between the learning agenda and the political economic agenda of the institutional provider or among competing social agendas of the provider or sponsor of adult education. In negotiating these conflicts, adult educators address the timeless political question: who benefits? Adult literacy education leaders are familiar with the ongoing negotiation of their institutional learning agendas and political-economic agendas. Every year they seek the necessary funding to maintain the vitality of their programs, and demonstrate to their institutional decision-makers or funding agencies why the literacy program is worthy of resources as opposed to other units, such as the academic degree programs in a community college, management courses in business and industries, or food banks in inner cities and many rural communities. They must address the question of why the learning needs of ABE and ESL students are as important as the other learners served by the institution or other citizens in their workplaces and communities.

***All adult educators are social activists in practice.***

Asking the question, Who benefits? is an important tool for understanding the politics of adult education. However, out of the struggles that define the politics of practice is created an adult education policy, program, or practice. By our actions as adult educators, we have also answered the ethical question, Who should benefit? The political and ethical questions raised in practice are not easy, for what happens when adult educators meet real systems of power and privilege in classrooms, organizations, and communities? In this world where adult education takes place, there are political and ethical dilemmas, contradictions, and possibilities for action. Thus, as we ask the political question of Who benefits? We must also ask the question of Who *should* benefit from our adult education efforts? Adult educators' efforts at influencing national and state policies to strengthen literacy opportunities for adults is a clear example of our social activism in practice. We fundamentally believe that adults should continue to have learning opportunities to improve their knowledge and the material conditions of their lives. We are not neutral in this struggle for national and state policy and funding to ensure that adult literacy education programs have the resources to carry out this vital social mission (Quigley, 2013).

Because the question of who should benefit is answered in practice, there can be no politically innocent place for adult educators. At the heart of practice, then, I believe that every adult educator is a social activist,

regardless of his or her social vision. We cannot be released from our responsibility for affecting the wider world in which we live. Hall (1997) explains that all adult education can make an impact in fashioning a different world in virtually all settings:

Elements of this shift from the vision of a world which doesn't work to a world which might work better are possible to include in literally any course or programme that can be conceived. It may require some extra effort, it may require the development of a whole new set of tools or ways of working, but it can be done and it is important to try. (p. 18)

Hall emphasizes that even though a program may be technical or vocational, there is always something an adult educator can do to draw attention to possibilities of change. Youngman (1996) amplifies this idea:

Adult educators work in a wide variety of situations, ranging from institutions of the state to organizations of civil society. Their scope for a critical practice varies accordingly. However, it is our contention that spaces can be found in all situations if adult educators are clear about their social goals and how these can be embodied in their day to day activities. (p. 4)

Teachers of adult literacy change students' lives every day, giving them the necessary skills and the hope for a better life. These teachers are not neutral actors in this classroom space, as they provide leadership for teaching and learning, and go the extra mile to foster students' success.

Because we live and act in a world where power and knowledge are continually negotiated, adult education offers hope and possibility to all learners, organizations, and communities. In order to realize these possibilities, we need to focus attention at the heart of practice to understand how power relations in the wider society are being enacted in the specific locations of adult education. The question posed in this paper is "Professionalization for What?" By bringing greater visibility to the political and ethical choices, contradictions, and consequences of adult education, we can better understand how to create policies, programs, and practices that give people more control over their social, political, economic, and cultural lives. By doing so, we are more likely to fulfill the promise of adult and continuing education. In the end, we do not need to choose between the social reformist and professionalization traditions.

### Future Directions for Professionalization of Adult and Continuing Education

In the invitation to write this article, Gary Dean and Allan Quigley asked me to look ahead with suggestions for the future of this vital area of our field. They asked me to address the questions: Have we succeeded in fulfilling the promise of professionalization and to what extent? What might the possibilities and directions be for making a greater difference in the area you have taken such a major role in helping to shape? In this final section, I will revisit the recommendations I made in 1992 about professionalization and identify the challenges we now face as a field and the organizational strategies that we should use to address these challenges.

In 1992, I concluded that: "It is my hope that the field can move beyond the issue of whether it should professionalize. Adult education has answered this question by engaging in the process of awarding credentials through higher education institutions" (Cervero, 1992, p. 48). I believe that this hope has been realized as the debates that were so prominent in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s have since receded into the background. I went on to say that:

Instead, attention should be focused on the issue of which models of professionalization should be followed. Professionalization should recognize that different (and to some extent competing) purposes, knowledge, and ideologies underlie the work of adult educators. The very least we can do is ensure that these differences are represented in the content of graduate training programs and in the constituencies of professional associations. We must not trivialize the knowledge and practice of those who work outside the mainstream. We must recognize that adult educators' work with marginalized members of society, such as the poor and racial minorities, is as valid as that of educators who focus on dominant groups, such as business and the professions. (p. 48)

I believe that this vision of professionalization has been interwoven into our graduate programs (Sonstrom, Rachal, & Mohm, 2013), which is evidenced by the content of the *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference* and our major research journals, such as *Adult Education Quarterly*, *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, *Studies in Continuing Education*, and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education*.

Twenty-five years later, however, the field faces a new set of challenges as the political economy of higher education provides a very different environment for our graduate programs. Indeed, this new environment poses an existential threat that undermines the future professionalization of adult and continuing education. I gave the keynote address at the 2014 Commission of Professors of Adult Education (Cervero, 2014) enumerating these challenges and offered a prescription of organizational responses. Higher education is in the midst of a large-scale and historic transformation driven by political-economic dynamics, leading to the privatization of public higher education in the USA. Virtually all graduate programs are located in public institutions, which have seen a dramatic reduction in state funding over the past 25 years. For example, when I arrived at the University of Georgia in 1986, 55% of funding had been provided by the state, and in FY 2017, our university will receive about 26% from the state with the difference being made up primarily through student tuition. Unfortunately, Georgia receives a relatively higher percentage from the state, compared with other universities that house graduate programs in adult education (e.g., Penn State).

Colleges of Education have been particularly vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including changes in use of higher education credentials to employ beginning teachers and the decoupling of pay raises and graduate degrees in education. With the rise of alternative providers for professional certification, the re-focus on clinical preparation of professionals, and the substantial use of distance technologies for instruction, colleges of education are in a period of great transformation. College deans increasingly require graduate faculty to maintain academic respectability through their scholarship and success in external research funding. All of these external and internal political-economic transformations have caused graduate programs to demonstrate their worth to maintain existing faculty lines and the ability to offer graduate degrees in the field. As we have seen over the past 25 years, some programs have not been able to do this and have been closed or have shrunk considerably.

The irony of this struggle to maintain graduate programs is that adult education and lifelong learning have become much more visible in society and more central to social and organizational change. As a result, other disciplines in and out of education are preparing people for roles that we have had exclusive claim over. So it truly matters that our graduate programs continue to exist and thrive so that we can recruit and prepare students for the workforce and continue building our field. To this end, I offered a series of organizational strategies that leaders of graduate

programs should employ (Cervero, 2014). Graduate programs must have a strategy that is based on an understanding of how our institutional mission and funding priorities are being impacted by these transformational changes in the wider society. Elements of such a strategy need to include a focus on faculty hiring practices, research productivity, access and completion of academic programs, partnerships and outreach, and internal and external public relations. Specifically, I proposed that we should:

- Align with the university's mission and strategic needs and demonstrate why we are essential in the fulfillment of that mission.
- Stay focused on program quality, including: faculty scholarship, effective teaching, innovative delivery, and relevant curricula.
- Pursue partnerships in research, instruction, and service with other key units on campus.
- "Follow the money" by building credit hours, external grants, fundraising, and development.
- Communicate to stakeholders: students, alumni, college and university leaders.

### **A Concluding Note**

I argued in 1992 that professionalization can be a force for good in society and offered six principles to guide our professionalization (Cervero, 1992, p. 49). They are offered again here:

1. Adult educators are not value neutral possessors of a technical process. We are political actors within a social structure, and our programs always have outcomes that either maintain this structure or change it. We must continually review the ends of our practice, not just the means.
2. Adult educators must recognize that problems requiring learning usually do not develop within the individual but rather are a function of the individual within the social, political, and economic context. Individuals and their learning needs cannot be isolated from the circumstances that produced those needs.
3. The larger portion of adults' learning does not require assistance. We should not seek to destroy the beauty of friends teach-

ing friends; rather, we should discriminate among situations where adult educators would provide more effective learning and where it would not.

4. Adult educators should not seek autonomy in decision-making regarding learners' needs or solutions to those needs. Rather, learners should be involved individually and collectively in determining needs and solutions.
5. Learning needs should not be treated as deficiencies of the individual that can be treated and remedied. Rather, learning needs should be treated as an adult's right to know.
6. Adult educators have a symbiotic relationship with adult learners. While learners could probably survive without educators, we cannot exist without learners. Thus, we must avoid the temptation to create and exploit learning needs simply to support the field of adult education.

I argued that if these principles guided the process of professionalization, the field would value the outcome of this process for practice. Otherwise, professionalization would serve only as a mechanism for the creation and protection of jobs for adult educators. I continue to be hopeful that professionalization will help us achieve the promise of adult and continuing education. But my hope does not result from a belief that progress is inevitable. As we have recently seen, our field is under an existential threat to its very existence. My hope results from seeing the future being made through the struggles of adult educators, not in some utopian future but in the here and now, in the places we live and work, using the power and privilege we have to achieve what we can. In the end, we are on this planet for a few brief seconds, so let us stand together and use those seconds wisely to achieve a better future for learners and the society in which we live.

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