

INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN ADULT EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Stefanie Kröner, Vanna Boffo, Regina Egetenmeyer

1. Internationalisation in adult education practice and research

Internationalisation is a phenomenon that can be observed in both adult education practice and adult education research. In 1999, Knoll suggested that adult education practice in Germany seemed to be much more international than adult education research, but nowadays, the need for internationalisation in adult education seems to be acknowledged in both sectors. In adult education practice, international target groups have emerged, such as refugees taking integration classes or the increasingly international staff in companies and firms. Furthermore, it has become much more common for people in society to have an international or migration background, which leads to international target groups in adult education. Likewise, continuing education provision related to selling products (e.g. trainings for handling complex machines) provides international perspectives on lifelong learning. For adult education organisations, internationalisation (e.g. offering more integration classes) means a change in programme structure and in personnel development (Robak, 2018; Heinmann, Stoffels & Wachter, 2018). For instance, administrative processes for course registration have to be in a language that persons without knowledge of the native language can understand. In addition, intercultural contexts of teaching and learning have to be considered to enable successful learning processes. Thus, adult educators and administrative staff need intercultural awareness and an understand-

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Stefanie Kröner, Vanna Boffo, Regina Egetenmeyer, *International and Comparative Studies in Adult Education: An Introduction*, pp. 7-13, © 2020 Author(s), CC BY 4.0 International, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-155-6.01, in Regina Egetenmeyer, Vanna Boffo, Stefanie Kröner (edited by), *International and Comparative Studies in Adult and Continuing Education*, © 2020 Author(s), content CC BY 4.0 International, metadata CC0 1.0 Universal, published by Firenze University Press (www.fupress.com), ISSN 2704-5781 (online), ISBN 978-88-5518-155-6 (PDF), DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-155-6

ing of different cultural teaching and learning contexts. The academic professionalisation (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012) of adult educators can contribute towards their intercultural awareness.

But the academic world of adult education now also acknowledges the need for internationalisation. This is not only evident in international study programmes, international visiting professorship programmes, and international students exchanges but also in the discourse of adult education itself. For a long time, international references in adult education seemed to be limited to the respective language contexts or to EU policy documents. However, the acknowledgement and referencing of discourses beyond researchers' own language frame and country community now seem to become more and more a reality. English publications make this easier, but of course, publishing in English does not mean that writers are able to transport the full philosophical and discursive backgrounds of adult education, which are tied to different languages. For understanding discourses in different languages and country contexts, it is helpful to make implicit and explicit comparisons to become aware of one's own understanding and non-understanding. The Winter Schools on *International and Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*, which have been offered since 2014 by many international partners on Campus Würzburg, support such insights and comparisons. They created not only a field of study for students but also a community of comparative research in adult education with several publications (Egetenmeyer, 2016; Egetenmeyer, Schmidt-Lauff & Boffo, 2017; Egetenmeyer & Fedeli, 2017; Egetenmeyer & Mikulec, 2019).

2. *The Winter School* International and Comparative Studies for Students and Practitioners in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

Although an international community has emerged in recent years among students and researchers in adult education and lifelong learning, there is growing need and interest in a deeper linkage to international activities of adult education practice. The consortium developed the term "colleagues from the field of adult education" to also include colleagues working at adult education associations. The learning module is developed as a blended-learning module, which comprises a three-month online study phase followed by a two-week Winter School in Würzburg (Germany). In the first week, participants work either on international policy strategies towards lifelong learning or on theories for international adult education. Field visits to practice organisations in adult education and guest lectures by international stakeholders round off the programme and contribute towards a better understanding of adult education in different cultural and national contexts. In the second week,

participants work in groups on different sub-topics in adult education. Examples are national qualification frameworks, the professionalisation of adult educators, active citizenship, and employability. In those comparative groups, each topic is discussed from different perspectives: from different cultural and national contexts and from representatives of theory and practice. Each group on average consists of six to ten participants and one to three colleagues from adult education practice. After the programme, doctoral students have the possibility to work together with international experts and Winter School fellows on comparative papers. Colleagues from the field of adult education are invited to present their good practice in a paper. In a first step, the comparative papers from the doctoral follow a blind peer-review process, the papers from the practitioners followed an editor-review. In a second step, the publication was submitted to an external refereeing process under the responsibility of the Florence University Press Editorial board and the scientific committee of the serie *Studies on Adult Learning and Education*. The fact that the Winter School brings together students, teaching staff and colleagues from adult and continuing education practice at different stages of their academic and/or vocational career has the potential for all of them to understand different theoretical, practical, and political perspectives through mutual exchanges. Conducting joint research enables all participants to reflect on their own perspectives and to gain inspiration from different good practices.

3. *The Winter School as part of the DAAD programme Higher Education Dialogue with Southern Europe*

The publication in the series *Studies on Adult Learning and Education* at University Florence Press shows the extensive collaboration of the Winter Schools between universities in Southern Europe and Germany. The University of Florence has worked together with the University of Würzburg since the beginning of its international activities in adult education. This deep level of collaboration also applies to the University of Lisbon and the University of Padua.

The DAAD programme *Higher Education Dialogue with Southern Europe* seeks to strengthen contacts among universities and other higher education institutes in Germany and Southern Europe. Such networks are expected to contribute to the “intra-European socio-political dialogue” (DAAD, 2018) through academic exchange among those countries. This DAAD programme is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

For the Winter School 2019, funding from this DAAD programme enabled the participation of 13 master’s and doctoral students from the universities Florence and Padua (Italy) and Lisbon (Portugal), as well as

five professors from the University of Florence (Italy), Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg (Germany), the University of Lisbon (Portugal), and the University of Padova (Italy). This publication is also supported by the DAAD programme *Higher Education Dialogue with Southern Europe* (Project number: 57448245).

The volume *International and Comparative Studies in Adult and Continuing Education* presents results from the 2019 Winter School. It provides insights into comparative adult education in Southern Europe and Germany but also into partnerships with other international universities. It comprises three thematic foci: (1) *Teaching internationalisation and comparative adult and continuing education*, (2) *Comparative papers on adult and continuing education*, and (3) *Projects and practices from adult and continuing education*.

4. *Teaching internationalisation and comparative adult and continuing education*

In the first part, four papers look at *Teaching internationalisation and comparative adult and continuing education* from different perspectives.

Regina Egetenmeyer introduces comparative adult and continuing education and presents a guide for doctoral students on how to do comparative research in adult education, introducing a step-by-step research process in comparative adult and continuing education. This paper also offers a discussion of important aspects of comparative research, such as categories, juxtaposition, and research question.

Vanna Boffo analyses storytelling and other skills for building employability in higher education. She understands storytelling as an asset for professional development and looks at professional stories, education, and employability.

Sabine Schmidt-Lauff and *Emmanuel Jean-Francois* discuss the facilitation of comparative group work in adult education. Comparative group work is analysed as a part of comparative education. Additionally, they present an outcome-based, a team-based, and a learner-centred approach to comparative group work. Finally, they suggest strategies for learner engagement.

Balazs Németh introduces his experiences from the comparative group work on developing active citizenship through adult learning and education. He discusses the role of adult learning and education in the development of active citizenship, the common understanding of active citizenship, and finally points out challenges and limitations of global citizenship.

5. *Comparative papers on adult and continuing education*

The second part of this volume comprises six different *Comparative papers on adult and continuing education*. Following the results on new pro-

fessionalism theories (Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt, & Lechner 2019), professionalism in adult and continuing education can be understood in a multi-level perspective. This includes the understanding of adult educators working in different fields facing various requirements that follow different acting logics.

Borut Mikulec, Alex Howells, Dubravka Mihajlović, Punia Turiman, Nurun Najah Ellias, and Miriam Douglas analyse national qualifications frameworks as a policy instrument for lifelong learning in Ghana, Malaysia, and Serbia. This also includes a discussion of the recognition of prior learning in those countries and support for lifelong learning as proclaimed objectives.

Jessica Kleinschmidt, Claire Garner, and Jörg Schwarz compare master's degree programmes in adult and lifelong education in Germany and the United States. The paper points out how adult and lifelong education programmes differ in their contents, structures, and aims. Furthermore, those are related to different concepts of professional roles.

Paula Guimaraes and Marta Gontarska discuss adult education policies and sustainable development in Poland and Portugal: a comparative analysis of policies and practices. They analyse civil society organisations and social movements that offer adult education to increase awareness of those policies and of sustainable development. The paper especially highlights the challenges in those implementation processes.

Shalini Singh and Søren Ehlers analyse employability as a global norm and compare transnational employability policies of OECD, ILO, World Bank Group, and UNESCO. The paper points out consequences of employability as a global norm that has an impact on stakeholders in lifelong learning.

Bolanle C. Simeon-Fayomi, Valentina Guerrini, and Denise Tonelli analyse teachers as agents of change and compare teacher training and the gender dimension in adult education in Italy and Nigeria. This paper outlines gender hierarchies and stereotypes and discusses how teachers can contribute towards the promotion of gender equality.

Tajudeen Akinsooto, Concetta Tino, and Monica Fedeli analyse critical reflection in the frame of transformative learning in higher education and compare the fostering of critical reflection of students in Italy and Nigeria. This process is considered on a micro and on a meso level.

6. *Projects and practices from adult and continuing education*

The third part of this volume comprises five *Projects and practices from adult and continuing education*. Colleagues from adult education practice affiliated with DVV International and the European Association for the Education of Adults contributed those insights in their best practices.

The good practice cases support the comparative groups in focusing on the practical relevance of their theoretical considerations, challenging students and teachers to keep different aspects of adult education practice in mind.

Geraldine Silva from Portugal looks at the way adult education offerings in the Portuguese Qualifica Centre Azambuja are advertised using Facebook as a social networking tool. The centre is one of the Qualifica Centres in Portugal, which are responsible for the dissemination of adult education pathways (e.g. via radio, leaflets, etc.).

Miriam Douglas presents the Community Education Program at West Liberty University, West Virginia, USA. The paper compares adult and higher education in West Virginia and in Germany.

Heribert Hinzen discusses local and global perspectives on adult education and lifelong learning in regard to the 100th anniversary of Volkshochschule and the 50th anniversary of DVV International. The paper discusses the historical events leading to the foundation of Volkshochschule and DVV International along with the development of adult education.

Thomas Lichtenberg discusses the Curriculum globALE by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) and DVV International as a global tool for professionalising adult educators. The paper analyses Curriculum globALE as a five-module professionalisation tool that has been used in different national and cultural contexts.

Aleksandra Kozyra and *Silvia Tursi* present the Younger Staff Training at the European Association for the Education of Adults as a learning journey. The training contributes towards the professionalisation of adult educators in Europe and enables collaborations amongst the participants. The paper points out how staff and organisations benefit from the training.

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