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Developments in the
Education of Adults
in Europe



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Contents

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Preface	7
<i>Franz Pöggeler</i> : Introduction - Trends of Andragogical Research in Europe	9 ✓
<i>Izabella Ratman-Liwerska</i> : Dilemma of Democracy and Adult Education in Poland	17
<i>Pavel Hartl</i> : Adult Education At Large	25
<i>Serguey I. Zmeyou</i> : Perspectives of Adult Education in Russia	35
<i>Rifat Okcabol</i> : Decision-Making Process in Turkish Adult Education	43
<i>Theo Jansen and Cess Klassen</i> : Some Reflections on Individualisation, Identity and Socialisation in (Post) Modernity	61
<i>Bo Jacobsen</i> : The Role of Participants' Life Experiences in Adult Education	81
<i>Walter Leirman</i> : The Future of Adult Education in Europe: A Proposal Based on a Delphi Research Project in Belgium	91
<i>Denis O'Sullivan</i> : Socially-Committed Learning Programmes: Towards Provider Reflexivity	101
<i>Elisabeth Gerver</i> : A Marriage of Convenience: Research and Policy Making in Scottish Continuing Education	121
<i>Eleonore Arthur</i> : Language, Culture and Adult Education - a British Perspective	135

about society, civilisation and even life itself are being asked. This is a crucial debate and one in which adult educators should join.

One reason for juxta-positioning these chapters in this manner is that the ex-Eastern Bloc countries, having just embraced capitalism and Western-style democracy have not yet been confronted to a great extent with the questions surrounding modernity itself. These are major issues for comparative education which Jarvis did not deal in his paper at the seminar but which have been inserted subsequently into the final chapter for this book.

Apart from Jarvis' concluding chapter in which he examines some of the problems surrounding the problems of comparative adult education there are three other chapters from the United Kingdom and Eire. These chapters illustrate developments in these countries, some of which may be indicators of the ways that adult education and training is developing in Western Europe.

This book, then, may be seen as a further attempt to focus upon the developments in adult education and training in Europe, although it is clear that this, like its predecessor, is not more than a start of the comparative process.

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Introduction

Franz Pöggeler (University of Aachen)

Trends in Andragogical Research in Europe

In a widening world every science must be as global and international as possible, because peoples, nations and cultures can learn from one another, and their cooperation is a good precondition for peace. Everyone engaged in research looks for the recent results, wherever she or he can find them.

For the research in adult education internationality is already well established, and it is an advantage of andragogy that this educational science is more accustomed to work in an international and worldwide frame than does pedagogy of school. School-pedagogy is quite older and has the greater tradition, but when we read the fundamental books of school-pedagogy we can see that books from other nations and languages are not quoted very often. The trends and tendencies of research in adult education are rather similar in many countries of the world – or at least on continents like Europe, Africa or America.

Of course, the trends of research are always changing, and that what can be described here is only a snapshot, and it is not sufficient if we want to reach informative comparisons.

An attempt similar to ours was made in 1962 by A. S. M. Hely in his book about "New Trends in Adult Education from Elsinore to Montreal" (two world-conferences on adult education, realized by UNESCO)¹. The book was influenced by the word "change".

Some remarks about the internationality of andragogical theories

While modern theories of school education are often characterized by a certain nationality or national culture, many theories of adult education have a wider reference and some of these theories are well known in all countries where research in adult education is undertaken. There is a good contact between the experts, and chances for international cooperation are already institutionalized. Experts of adult education are not only

accustomed to inform us continuously about the proceedings and results of research, but we work together in a remarkable number of projects aiming at a common theory and also at reaching agreement over our methodological dispositions. What is the reason?

We see that at least in the industrialized countries a process of assimilation is in full swing – a consequence of the modern media that bring the most distant events very near to us. We can also see that a continuous exchange of *material* values belongs to the daily work of economy and that an exchange of *cultural* and *intellectual* values follows immediately. This exchange can never be prevented, even by totalitarian systems; they can close their borders for a limited time but not for an eternity. All nations – they may be extremely different – profit from material and cultural exchange and achieve some similar aims and strategies.

In this way we can explain the exciting end of the former communist states in East and South East Europe: From yesterday to tomorrow these states will not become perfect democracies, but a development of new liberty and initiative has begun. Step by step these ideologies loose their efficiency. Adult education is appreciated by some people as an important factor in creating better social and individual life. Nevertheless the countries and cultures retain certain peculiarities which are typical, and which inspire the researchers to new comparisons. But the comparative research in adult education tends today more to discover some similar aspirations for life, probably more than they discover different and separate ones. In the comparative political and economical sciences this means that we have not only to define the national, but also the broader social identity: in this instance, the European one.

Not only in policy and economy but also in culture and education, we will not have the choice between national autarchy and continental cooperation, because it is almost impossible to retain national identity in this global world. Political planning has itself almost become now an old-fashioned fiction.

Some trends of research in adult education

It may be that some of that what we regard as European trends in adult education research are at the moment more programmes or wishes than facts, but an understanding of such trends can be helpful for future developments in our research.

1) Though we do not deny that we are always obliged to do our job in a certain political, ethnical and economic system we need to take into account the international knowledge about our research subjects. It would be principally the same to investigate a topic or a problem in England or in Hungary, in Sweden or in Spain. Not only are the methodological instruments and techniques rather the same, but also the structure of problems that we have to clear are similar.

2) With this trend another one is combined: Internationally oriented research is sometimes *comparative* research. We do not only compare our theories, but also the social, political and economic conditions by which the theories are influenced. Comparative research is only reliable if we have found a common agreement about principles of comparison and if we compare from an international, multi-national point of view. The comparative research in adult education was started in 1958 by Robert Peers in his famous book "Adult Education – A comparative study". Comparative research on the world-level presumes a precise knowledge of regions and countries, and this precondition can be best fulfilled in teamwork. So Walter Leirman and I organized a world-survey on "Adult Education in Five Continents", published in 1979 with 34 authors.³ Peter Jarvis has nowadays reactivated this teamwork in the book which gives the occasion for this international conference: The new book gives for the first time an allround summary on adult education in the whole of Europe.

We should not forget that comparative research in adult education has also been undertaken since the sixties in South East Europe. It is a pity that for instance the comparative studies of Borivoj Samolovcev are only available in the Serbo-Croatian language and not in English or in French. The interest in comparative research seems to be especially great in countries situated at the boundaries of countries and cultures.

3) A review on the recent literature of adult education in Europe seems to show that political aspects of adult education are "en vogue" because of new political and policy influences at adult education. New results of research in our field make us realise the interdependence between policy and adult education is not uni-directional (from policy to adult education). As an institution to reform the attitudes of adults, adult education can be a factor of policy and an intervention into political processes. Andragogy cannot be regarded as a totally apolitical science. The above mentioned trend to correct international comparisons can be an efficient protection against possible developments of new ideologies. As

a remarkable attempt we can note the book "Policy and Research in Adult Education – The First Nottingham International Colloquium 1981", edited by Brian Harvey⁴ and the book "The State and Adult Education".⁵

4) All research in our field depends upon a clear picture of the *adult* as the "subject" of adult education. It is not sufficient only to recognize the social, economic and political circumstances, in which adults live today; we must also know the attitudes and self-consciousness of adults, the aims and values of their life. Here we are moving in the field of a new *anthropology* of the adult. This part of our research work can only be done as an interdisciplinary work – in cooperation with pedagogy, psychology, sociology, philosophy, biology, ethnology and ethology.

5) It is exciting to see that a great part of the anthropological research in our field refers to adults in the *second half of life*, while the middle time of adulthood is up to now rather less well researched. In the fifties and sixties a lot of books were published with descriptions of the life of *young* adults, but now anthropology devotes more energy to find out about the role and self-consciousness of older people. Psychology and medicine have produced that what we call gerontology, and as a special field of andragogical research *geragogy or gerontology* is beginning to alter the scene of our anthropological engagement. While several decades ago young adults were the largest group of participants in our courses, an increasing number of participants are being recruited now from the over-50's. The importance of seniors' education (and seniors' study in the universities) is evident. Perhaps in ten or twenty years adults of the second half of life will be the major target group of adult education. The new "olds" are the pioneers of a new type of older people, of "juvenile olds". "New olds" are already a favourite clientele of adult education. It is a high time for our research-planning to investigate also the adults of the age between 30 and 50, because they are still the greatest age-group of participants in our institutes.

6) Another trend in researching adult education is to register and explain the *social structure* of the clientele of adult education. For example the following questions are topics of new researches: What are the reasons for the fact that only 10 to 20% of all adults take part in adult education?

Why is there an "educational abstention" of 80 or more percent? And what about the total "feminisation" of adult education, that means: that in industrialized countries already 70 and more percent of the participants

are women? Why do the male citizens not attend the courses in the same measure as women?

Another topic is the change of the social structure in adult education as a consequence of the increasing "mixture" of the populations in industrial countries caused by the tremendous migration from Asia and Africa – and also from the East of Europe.

7) Undoubtedly, adult education has found in the last decades a new dimension in the *Third World* where it is not only acting as an instrument of development aid. But after years of experiments and of a rather unreflected action we must summarize the results of this engagement, the successes as well as the mistakes. More and more experts believe that systems of adult education of the First and Second World cannot be imitated or transplanted to the Third World; we need a new "development-andragogy" specialised for the life conditions in developing countries. This new type of andragogy must be invented and tested by experts of the Third World and cannot be imported from Europe or USA. Indeed there is a new trend of research among our colleagues in the developing countries and we, in Europe and USA, can only give them advice if we are asked, but we have no reason to try to dominate their activities.

8) In consequence of the fact that the "golden years" of financial sponsoring adult education seem to be over, the sponsors and also the organizers ask: What are the *effects* and *results* of adult education? There is a new trend of *efficiency-control* and it is necessary to construct a reliable instrument for it. This is a complicated task! We cannot be satisfied with the conviction that adult education in a liberal society is more or less a "free trade in knowledge" as John Henry Newman observed. Of course, the mature citizen has to be ultimately responsible for the results of his or her continuing education, but the organizers are also responsible for its successful performance. The institutions of adult education must cooperate with research in achieving criteria for successful learning and teaching.

9) Adult education is only one of several sectors of a modern educational system. Therefore it is quite normal that trends of research in other sectors also influence the research in that what we call in Germany "the fourth sector". Such a trend is that of understanding adult education according to the "lifeworlds" in which it occurs. This point of view is not the same as the former milieu aspect; "Lifeworlds" are regarded as relatively compact sectors of the society – with their own traditions, man-

ners, values and habits – and also with their own demands upon adult education.

"Lifeworlds" can, for instance, be found in a suburb, in a part of a city, in a community of immigrants from an other country and culture, in a group of seniors living in a hostel or in a community of singles – or in a street with many unemployed people. The types of further education in these lifeworlds are often rather unorganized, but they exist and must not be neglected in the strategies of educational advertisement.

10) Sometimes the "lifeworlds", each of which is a kind of educational microcosm, cultivate *new types of adult education*.

In Germany this is called *alternative* or *other* adult education and it must be acknowledged in the official system of financial assistance. There is a major concern to research the questions why the new types come into being, why the new participants were not content with the existing institutes and how the new types work. They do it with a minimum of organization and bureaucracy – and with a maximum of independence and political effort. The existence of these groups is proof that adult education is still a field with much innovation and creativity.

Worldwide Information

We do not intend to offer a complete list of the trends which can be seen in our contemporary research activities. Of course other trends can also play a role. Our survey is based on the long observation of the most discussed new books in several languages, but also an oral information from colleagues who are more informed about the research in their countries. More intensive and continuous information about our research would help us to appreciate what is happening in our field. A yearly international bibliography might be a suitable instrument for our information. Abstracts of the contents would be necessary in case we are not familiar with the languages in which certain books are written. This may be a simple method to transcend the language barriers that hinder our cooperation.

It might be possible that some research institutes collect all the publications which record research in adult education; but we would do well if we could find *one* library, or institute, where all new books could be gathered and where we can gain all necessary information. Lack of information can be no excuse for mistakes.

I think that we are all convinced that we inform, assist and inspire each other, not only by the exchange of publications, but also by speaking with each other as much as possible. A critique of the modern research management has asserted that conferences and congresses are an expensive market of vanity and prestige. But they can also be useful and exciting for developing new ideas and for exchanging information.

Notes

- 1 A. S. M. Hely: *New Trends in Adult Education from Elsinore to Montreal* (Two world conferences on adult education), Paris (UNESCO), 1962.
- 2 London (Routledge & Kegan), London/New York 1968.
- 3 *Handbook of Adult Education*, vol. 5, Stuttgart 1979.
- 4 The Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1981.
- 5 Edited by Franz Pöggeler, Frankfurt a.M./Bern/New York/Paris 1990. It contains the lectures of two international conferences in Oxford 1986 and Aachen 1988.