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## ***Professionalisation of adult educators: International and comparative perspectives***

**Edited by Susanne Lattke and Wolfgang Jütte. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2014, 217 pp, Studies in Pedagogy, Andragogy and Gerontagogy, vol. 65, ISBN 978-3-631-65580-1 (hbk), ISBN 978-3-653-04791-2 (eBook)**

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In the introductory chapter of this book, the editors immediately emphasise two challenges related to the work on professionalisation of adult (and continuing) educators in an international perspective. These challenges concern the language issue on the one side and the transfer problem on the other side. “Language and terminology barriers, to begin with, affect to a smaller or greater extent almost any type of international activity, and very specific problems are connected to attempts of transferring or ‘borrowing’ good practices and ideas between different countries” (p. 12). This statement describes exactly indeed the major issue I experience with this collection of highly diverse chapters which are organised into three thematic sections, namely *Structures and Concepts*, *Professional Studies and Training*, and *Competencies and Profiles*.

The first section combines four introductory chapters from Ireland, France, Germany and Austria. In each of these chapters, the professionalisation of adult educators is approached as a matter of intellectually defining the social subject of professionalisation “as such”. Helen Murphy’s chapter on Ireland starts with an exploration of the current discourse, debate and policy developments. Richard Wittorski’s chapter on France defines professionalisation more through contextual issues, meaning and methods with at least some empirical basis. The chapter on Germany, by Joachim Ludwig and Stephanie Günther, describes what they call theoretical models of professional knowledge and their possible relevance for research. Finally, Petra Heidegred Steiner’s chapter on Austria is searching for a *new* conceptualisation of profession by investigating professional cultures. The *Structures and Concepts* section thus demonstrates in particular that the concept of professionalisation of adult educators has unfortunately more or less got stuck in a

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rut because of the so-called qualitative linguistic turn which is the characteristic of much of the pedagogical literature and discussion nowadays.

In contrast with the first section of the book, the second one, *Professional Studies and Training*, consists of the outcomes of concrete and practical research initiatives which are hardly influenced by barriers and misunderstandings grounded in language as such. The first chapter, written by Regina Egetenmeyer and Ingeborg Schübler, discusses academic professionalisation in Master's programmes in adult and continuing education, first from the German empirical perspective and then in the context of international comparative research. This leads to a concrete explorative semi-structured interview and survey which is currently being carried out in Germany and India. The interest and strength of this study is its main research question: *What is the influence of societal, institutional, and subjective factors of academic professionalisation on the professional identity of the students in adult and continuing education?* This clearly shows that professionalisation of adult educators at academic level does belong to subjective learning and students' experience of development rather than to the researchers and policymakers. The second chapter in this section, authored by Katrin Karu and Larissa Jögi, goes even deeper into the learning experiences of future professional adult educators. To me, this was the most interesting chapter of the whole book, because it investigates "the professional development of adult educators [which] is seen as a learning process, the focus of which is developing an understanding of learning, self as a learner and as an educator. Therefore the learning-teaching at university context emphasize [*sic*] interaction of two processes: 1. interpersonal processes: [...]; [and] 2. intrapersonal processes: [...]" (pp. 106–107). The final chapter of this section, authored by Susanne Lattke, starts with stressing the globally felt necessity for professionalisation (CONFINTEA V,<sup>1</sup> *EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* [CoE 2000]<sup>2</sup>). In this chapter, the author even dares to take the pragmatic step proposing a Curriculum *globALE*, a notion which I think is necessary and wise because otherwise it will never be done.

The third and final section, *Competencies and Profiles*, is a classic one in the sense that it begins with a chapter (written by Georgios K. Zafiris and Achilleas Papadimitriou) which describes yet another *proposed model framework* to identify key comparable professional competences for adult educators in the European context. From the perspective of the European Commission, this has been done too often in recent decennia. The next chapter, authored by Christian Marx, Annika Goeze and Josef Schrader, goes into the potential elements and test development of adult education teachers' pedagogical-psychological knowledge. This chapter at least shows the use of relevant and fundamental empirical input from the European

<sup>1</sup> The motto of the fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), held in 1997, was "Adult learning: A key for the twenty-first century".

<sup>2</sup> CoE (Commission of the European Communities) (2000). *A memorandum on lifelong learning*. SEC (2000) 1832. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

projects ALPINE and QF2Teach.<sup>3</sup> The final two chapters, by Bernd Käßplinger and Thomas J. Sork on *making program planning more visible*, and by Annika Goeze and Dorett Schneider on *recruiting practices*, unfortunately seem to fall accidentally outside the main topic of the book.

At the beginning of this review, I mentioned—as the editors did themselves—that language and terminology barriers may influence the benefits of the many conceptual descriptions and international discussions in this book. But I am at the same time convinced that most of the ongoing and proposed empirical studies in the central part of this collection of chapters are well worth reading about and transferring to other contexts internationally. These studies try to go into the core business of adult education and the professionalisation of adult educators. Practitioners, policymakers and researchers are best off in their attempt to understand the experiential learning processes of adults in adult education. These adults merit being educated well to overcome all the inequalities they may have encountered in their lifespan so far. This, then, leads to a process which is no longer an adaptation but a transformation for them.

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<sup>3</sup> “Adult Learning Professions in Europe2 (ALPINE) is a study which was commissioned and funded by the European Commission and carried out by Research voor Beleid and the PLATO centre for research and development in education and training at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. 2Qualified to teach” (QF2Teach) is a project which was run under the Leonardo da Vinci vocational education and training section within the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning programme.