Studies on Adult Learning and Education

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Comparative Adult Education and Learning

Authors and Texts

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PREFACE

Maria Slowey

> If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.
> [Attributed to George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)]

Associated with contemporary global trends is a growing interest in the international exchange of ideas and what might be learnt from comparing one country, region or sector with another. For some, the motivation is largely driven by an academic research interest, while for others the focus is on the exploration of new ideas with a view to enhancing policy and practice.

At its best, this attempt to learn from the experience of others can be invaluable in assisting reflection on 'taken for granted' concepts and approaches, and in contributing to the development of innovative theoretical and empirical perspectives. At its worst, however, an uncritical approach can underplay the vital importance of a deep understanding of context – historical, social, cultural – resulting in misguided efforts to transplant 'good practice' from one environment to another. The challenge of securing meaningful, mutual exchange is exacerbated by power differentials (for example, between the global north and global south) and the associated roles of different international and intergovernmental agencies.

1. Structure

This volume explores these issues through the specific lens of comparative research on adult education and learning. The book is divided into four chapters comprising two parts: an analytic essay followed by an anthology of readings from a selection of key texts. These readings are intended to illustrate different perspectives, theories and/or approaches. It is, of course, difficult to narrow the selection to just sixteen extracts from a diverse and rich vein of work, and no doubt others would have made different choices. Working within the constraint that the texts had to be readily available and published in English, we sought representation from authors (female and male) working on comparative issues and

from varying perspectives in different countries. Analysis and readings relating to research methods will be found in a companion volume to this book *Empirical Research Methodology in Adult Learning and Education. Authors and Texts* (Boffo, Federighi and Nuissl 2016)[1].

2. Chapter outline

In Chapter 1 I outline the field of study, introducing key concepts from comparative social science and teasing out distinctions and interrelationships between comparative, international and development education. This leads to a discussion of interpretations, relevance and applicability in the specific arena of *adult* education and learning.

While it is to be hoped that the development of knowledge is, to some extent at least, cumulative, it is undeniable that this process is not linear and that theoretical and empirical 'fashions' can be found across all disciplines. The case is made here that some degree of social and historical awareness is important as a base to better understanding of contemporary approaches to comparative adult education. In Chapter 2, therefore, I introduce a number of key stages and developments out of which contemporary developments have emerged.

Adult education and associated learning opportunities are highly diverse in terms of:

(i)   location (community, workplace, college, university, adult education centres, open access e-learning, libraries, etc.);
(ii) level (ranging from basic literacy to specialist continuing professional development);
(iii) purpose (social/political, personal, knowledge acquisition, skill development and/or job related);
(iv) policy interest (education, social inclusion, health, economy, regional development, agriculture, etc.).

In Chapter 3 Regina Egetenmeyer discusses these and associated complexities of comparative research in the field of adult education and learning, contrasting them with comparative research undertaken on formal education systems (schools, colleges, universities and the like). She proposes a focus on issues in adult education, which can be compared between different contexts. Following this approach, she suggests that comparative adult education is best understood as a specific perspective in adult education research, rather than a method or a research field in its own right.

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[1] Firenze, Firenze University Press.

International inter-governmental (IGO) and non-governmental or-ganisations (NGOs) play a significant role both in the development of policy and practice of adult education and also in shaping a good deal of the comparative discourse through the generation and dissemination of empirical data. In Chapter 4, Balázs Németh identifies some drivers which, on the one hand, support the promotion of international collabo-rations in adult and lifelong learning and, on the other, may contribute to barriers which restrain partnership development and building open structures amongst providers of adult education.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the readings under three bro-ad headings indicating the perspective they were primarily selected to illustrate: (a) conceptual issues; (b) empirical research; or (c) critical po-licy analysis of international or intergovernmental work in the arena of comparative adult education and learning. The readings provided here are best regarded as 'tasters'. To make the optimum use of this volume, readers are encouraged to seek out the full texts and also to follow up the extensive references contained in the four analytic chapters.

Table 1 – Categorisation of readings.

Conceptual issues	Examples of comparative research on adult education and learning	Critical policy analysis
Phillips and Schweisfurth (Ch 1) Carnoy and Rhoten (Ch 1) Merrill and Bron (Ch 2) Field Künzel and Schem-mann (Ch 2) Bray, Adamson and Mason (Ch 3) Duke (Ch4)	Desjardins (Ch 1) Yasukawa, Hamilton and Evans (Ch 2) Slowey and Schuetze (Ch 3) Dämmrich, de Vilhena and Reichart (Ch 3) Holford, Riddell, Weedon, Litjens and Hannan (Ch 3)	Federighi (Ch 1) Popović (Ch 2) Hinzen (Ch 4) Lima and Guimaráes' (Ch 4) Milana (Ch 4)

Finally, a word about terminology. In most countries adult education emerged from traditions which were quite different to those of formal systems of schooling, often with strong connections to social movements. As discussed in this book, for a variety of reasons – including a wide-spread policy focus on individual (as opposed to collective) learning, and the role of the workplace in fostering (or not) learning opportunities for adults – the connection with such historic roots has been subject to signi-ficant change. Increasingly, terms such as 'adult education and learning' or 'adult learning and education' appear in the literature (particularly in a policy context) to reflect this wider focus. While arguably 'adult edu-cation and learning' may imply a stronger focus on systems and provi-sion, and 'adult learning and education' a focus more on learning and outcomes, for practical purposes here they are regarded as interchange-

able; however, they are not synonymous, but reflect the preferred usage by authors of different chapters.

Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1

SCOPING THE FIELD OF STUDY: KEY CONCEPTS IN COMPARATIVE ADULT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Maria Slowey

> Three important trends are making comparative and international analysis increasingly relevant to educational research generally. They simultaneously make comparative work more complex. Globalization […] The vast expansion of knowledge-based production […] And new global ideological struggles have pitted radically different conceptions of postindustrialism against each other.
>
> [Carnoy 2006: 557-558]

Conceptually and methodologically, the field of comparative adult education and learning draws on a variety of social science disciplines, including sociology, psychology, economics, public policy, history and political science. To take a classic example of an early application of the comparative approach, Max Weber, one of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, turned his attention from Europe to China in order to find points of comparison in relation to the role of education in developing and sustaining bureaucratic and associated elites. In doing this he was not attempting a comprehensive socio-economic history of the Chinese mandarin class, but rather to gain insight as to how such elite groups were established and sustained. This included exploration of the important role which formal examinations played in the foundation and development of such elites, as illustrated by his observation that in China the «question usually put to a stranger of unknown rank was how many examinations he [sic] had passed» (Weber 1951: 115).

This perspective on education highlights a longstanding dynamic between three central – not infrequently competing – roles attributed to formal systems of education:

(a) A *transformative* function: associated with personal development (and related concepts such as *bildung)* enhancing the individual's knowledge and skills, social understanding and wider life chances.

(b) A *selection* function: associated with the role of education in socialisation reproduction of elites.

(c) An *economic* function: associated with meeting changing knowledge and skill requirements in the labour market.

These dynamics informed much of the debate on the factors under-pinning the expansion of formal initial and further education for children and young people to ever increasing proportions of the populations of European countries over the 19th and 20th centuries. They continue into the 21st century in the form of tensions between the role of education in supporting individual development and, potentially, social mobility (*wider access and equality*); its role in socialisation and selection for socio-economic advantage (*cultural and social capital*); and its role in addressing labour market requirements (*economic capital*).

For these reasons, a good deal of contemporary comparative research focuses on national policies and the expansion (and quality) of formal systems of education and training for children and young people. The concern of the present book lies elsewhere: in the education and learning opportunities that are available for people *beyond* compulsory school leaving age.

Because of their close connection to legal requirements for school attendance and national policies, the structures of formal systems of education and training can be relatively easily circumscribed for comparative purposes – focusing, for example, on:
- the age of the student (pre-school, compulsory school leaving age, etc.);
- the major providers (e.g. schools, universities, colleges);
- curricular issues;
- benchmark examinations (whether at school, state/region, national levels);
- governance (e.g. public/open, private/selective).

In contrast, comparative analyses of *adult education and learning* not only potentially contain many, if not most, of these variables, but are further compounded by additional complexities. Adult learners, by definition, are older than the 'compulsory' age for participating in formal education. They are highly diverse, not only in terms of age, but also, for example, in socio-economic status, levels of cultural capital, gender, lifestage and motivation. Furthermore, the funding and governance arrangements, range of providers and 'learning sites' are also highly differentiated, including, for example: public adult education centres; community groups; trade unions; professional bodies; non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of different kinds; and, public, private and social enterprise employers. And, when 'self-directed' learning is added to the mix, the picture becomes even more complex.

Many attempts have been made to categorise the range encompassed by adult education and learning. One common approach, promulgated, for example, through EC policies is to distinguish between formal, non-formal and informal adult education and learning.

Formal learning is 'intentional' from the perspective of the individual and typically takes place in an education or training institution and

is structured in terms of the curriculum, time required and/or learning support provided. Under some definitions formal learning is also normally assessed or accredited in some way.

Non-formal learning is structured and may occur in a variety of locations including the workplace or civil society organisations such as community groups.

Informal learning arises from daily life – through, for example, learning associated with engagement in employment, domestic, parental, leisure and civic activities.

While such categories may be appropriate for certain purposes, from a comparative research perspective they also pose challenges: adult learning does not occur in neat categories. Hence the importance of recognising «the interfusion and inseparability of formal and informal attributes in any learning situation» (Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm 2006: 56). A comprehensive review of concepts and practice in adult and lifelong learning by Paul Bélanger, a previous Director of the UNESCO Institute of Education, and President of the International Council of Adult Education, emphasises that individuals learn in a variety of ways, not only in organised learning situations. They learn through all

> kinds of opportunities and by all kinds of methods. Our vision of education and learning is changing. We are rediscovering that formal, credentialing education is only the visible part of the educational iceberg […] informal learning has now become an indispensable feature of the educational landscape not only in the workplace […] but in all areas of activity (Bélanger 2015: 22-23).

However, if learning takes place anywhere and everywhere and at any time in any form, the term 'adult education' potentially risks becoming meaningless as it is in danger of becoming almost synonymous with 'living'. Jarvis (2009: 2) provides a helpful distinction here. Learning, he suggests

> is a human process and this is not to be confused with learning in adult learning and lifelong learning – in these latter usages, learning is used as a gerund in a sense, institutionalised learning. In this sense, this is precisely what education is but the use of the term 'learning' does overcome some of the difficulties contained in the term 'education', although, as we see, it causes others! It is mainly in the institutionalized sense, rather than the human process sense, that lifelong learning is used […] although it is hard to separate the two at all times.

For the purposes of this book, therefore, the scope needs to be defined somewhat more specifically. In exploring key aspects of comparative research in adult education and learning the focus of this discussion

is thus on 'structured learning opportunities' in which adults participate, regardless of level, time or place.

In passing, it should be noted that this definition goes beyond that of, for example, UNESCO, which for decades concentrated on adult learners who are not in what UNESCO refers to as 'regular' school or university systems. An important limitation of this latter approach is that it ignored the fact that traditional patterns of study have changed «with an increasing number of students moving in and out of the education system and the labour market […] making it difficult to identify who is in the first cycle of studies and who is a recurrent learner» (Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana 2006: 23). The ways in which adults engage in contemporary formal and non-formal education and learning are indeed diverse, even when examining their participation in a relatively small part of the formal system such as higher education (Osborne, Gallacher and Crossan 2007; Slowey and Schuetze 2014; Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg 2014).

These issues will be explored further in the following four sections of this chapter. First, interpretations of 'learning from comparing' will be explored. Second, the more specific issue of scoping comparative research in the field of adult education and learning will be addressed. The third section is an exploration of the socio-political context. The fourth addresses the role of international actors in the policy arena, exploring the extent to which recent trends suggest growing isomorphism (or the contrary). Chapter 3 looks to the macro-context within which such research takes place, raising issues concerning the continuing salience of the nation state as *the* key unit for comparative work in the context of globalisation.

1. 'Learning from comparing'[1]: an introduction to comparative research

The notion that there is a great deal to be gained by learning about the experiences of others is one which is familiar in many aspects of social and personal life: from the micro level of the individual through to macro levels of the collective (such as a nation state). As expressed by T.S. Eliot (quoted by Evans and Robinson-Pant 2010: 693):

> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

From a social science perspective, the tendency of groups to view differences of other groups from the 'home' perspective can accentu-

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[1] This phrase draws on a book title: Alexander, Osborn and Phillips 2000.

ate such differences and lead to distortions. To the extent to which a group attempts to apply its own categories to the experiences of others «it is likely to generate errors of understanding and prediction about the others, who invariably organise their experience and act on the basis of categories other than those of the home group» (Smelser 2013: 2). This perspective underpins much classic work in comparative social science and remains particularly pertinent in this contemporary period of unprecedented global communications and mass migration. It does however raise the question as to whether 'comparative social science' is different from 'social science' *per se*? Does not all social inquiry involve some element of comparison, whether it be, for example, over time, between women and men, different social classes or age groups? Despite diversity in challenges presented, substance and strategy, Smelser (following Durkheim) makes the case that comparative social science should follow the rigour of methods and conceptual approaches of the parent discipline, and not be regarded as a 'species of inquiry' separate from wider social science investigation.

For others, international comparative research, while drawing on the traditions of particular disciplines, has developed its own distinctive methodological approaches. In this context, as will be discussed below and in Chapters 2 and 3, a case can also be made for the distinctiveness of particular sub-themes of comparative research, of which comparative adult education and learning is one example.

In the second decade of the 21st century the forces of globalisation mean that the momentum to explore and learn from the experiences of others appears greater than ever. In the field of education in particular, international organisations, national governments, researchers and practitioners increasingly look to international developments and examples. This is frequently done with a view to finding 'what works' in order to transfer ideas back to their own 'home' environment: knowing better their own 'place for the first time'. While from a comparative educational research perspective, this expansion of interest is surely something to be welcomed, it is not without challenges. Not only may studies be undertaken by non-specialists (for example, consultants and politicians) but there is the danger of seeking 'quick-fix' solutions and decontextualisation of data and findings (Watson 2001).

The point here is not to stand against greater involvement of different perspectives and disciplines, but also not to ignore the fact that the field of comparative education research is one which has a long history and is organisationally well developed. One such example of an important scholarly body in the field of comparative research is the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) established in 1970 and subsequently host to a regular series of World Congresses. The World Council serves as an umbrella organisation comprising UNESCO and

the global regional and national societies devoted to comparative education (for an account of the development of this body, see Bray, Manzon and Masemann 2007). Membership grew from five organisational members in 1970 to 47 by 2015. Most members are national comparative education societies, but some are organised around global regions (e.g. the Comparative Education Society of Europe [CESE 2016]) and language groups (e.g. the Association Francophone d'Education Comparée [AFDECE 2016]).

Comparative adult education and learning represents one sub-set of the interests of the World Congress (which span all arenas of education and training). It is interesting to note that from all fields of education in 2014 members elected Carlos Torres, a scholar of the work of Paolo Freire, as President. Torres (2013) outlined the main aims as being: to bring together the voices of the South and the North; to explore key issues such as diversity, social justice, multiculturalism; to build connections between international, comparative education as a field of study and work taking place in ethnic studies, gender studies and area studies; and to bridge the gap among social movements, community organisations and domestic governments and institutions on the one hand, and, on the other, the workings of international, bilateral and multilateral organisations.

This latter objective is important to note as international and intergovernmental agencies (such as the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank and the EU) play an increasingly important role in the field of comparative adult education and learning, including the setting of research agendas. In Chapter 2, I discuss some of the social and historical trends in the field of comparative research, drawing out some distinctive aspects of comparative work focusing on adult education and learning.

Also, as will be discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4, while the primary roles of intergovernmental agencies (in different ways and from different value positions) is to contribute to the development of policy and practice across their member countries, they also, directly and indirectly, play a major role in agenda-setting for research. For example, the large-scale empirical data sets they generate provide important evidential resources for academic researchers interested in comparative work through series such as the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the OECD's Education at a Glance, and UNESCO's quantitative and qualitative surveys.

An analysis by Carnoy (2006: 55) of the main purposes of comparative educational research, summarised below, includes explicit reference to the use of large data sets as one of the four main objectives:

1. To pursue a research programme that studies one country or region at a time within the context of a broader agenda of using such studies to 'compare' the results of the studies across time and space.

2. To pursue an international research program that builds on others' studies of the same issue, with the intent of constructing a larger comparative study on that theme.
3. To undertake studies of various countries or regions using the same methods of data collection and analysis.
4. To use large international data sets already available or create an international data set from national data sources, and then analyse those data comparatively.

It is, or should be, a truism that all research in the social sciences should be undertaken in a framework of critical inquiry. Mere description is always inadequate: research priorities, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and forms of dissemination are all socially constructed. As Holm (2014: 2) puts it, while there is the possibility that we may 'become wiser' by comparing ourselves with each other, comparisons must be used with caution and, ultimately, 'the force of sound judgment is with the user'.

In this respect, independence and academic rigour are crucial, as supported by mechanisms such as peer review, books, journals, conference papers and the like. In the field of comparative education, the longest established journal in a continuously expanding field is *Comparative Education Review*, a journal sponsored since 1957 by the American Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). In 2010, one of the other major journals published in English, *Compare*, sponsored by the British CIES, commemorated its 40th year of publication. The editors at the time, Karen Evans and Anna Robinson-Pant, took the opportunity to review the state of the field, interviewing former editors about what they regarded as the key issues and priorities over their respective tenures as editors (Evans and Robinson-Pant 2010).

The reflections of the previous editors of *Compare* highlighted many global changes from the 1970s to the 2010s. However, one recurrent theme to emerge from these reflections was a continuing discussion about the interrelationship between three closely connected, but distinctive areas of work: first, comparative education; second, international education; and third, development education. In this context, definitions of comparative education, international education and international development «were and are continually evolving» (Evans and Robinson-Pant 2010: 698). Different definitions abound, but, in summary, the main differences in orientation are as follows.

Comparative education: the primary focus here is on conceptual and empirical development, drawing on a range of academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics, history, etc.) to undertake independent comparative research investigating topics across different environments. This research may, or may not, have direct implications for policy and practice.

International education: the concentration here is on the potential of intercultural exchange, and opportunities for learners and teachers to engage with educational activities outside their home country.

Development education: the orientation here builds on an explicit value position which seeks both to contribute to knowledge about the causes of poverty and associated ills in developing countries (the 'global South') and to contribute, also, to possible mitigating action which might be taken through education.

This summary description can be regarded as an ideal–type (in Weber's sense) description of the main characteristics of closely connected conceptual fields. In reality, Evans and Robinson–Pant (2010: 705) show that there is a great deal of overlap both of individual scholars and of actual research undertaken.

> When we examine what international scholars actually do, we see there are no monopolies. Development studies and studies of international development focus on change enhanced by good analysis and quality of analysis is enhanced by comparison. It is therefore self–evident that comparativists do not have a monopoly on systemic and scholarly comparison. Similarly, neither development studies nor international studies of educational development have a monopoly on change and advocacy; nor does international education have a monopoly on the pursuit of intercultural understanding.

Figure 1.1 – Intersecting domains (adapted from Evans and Robinson–Pant 2010, Figure 1).
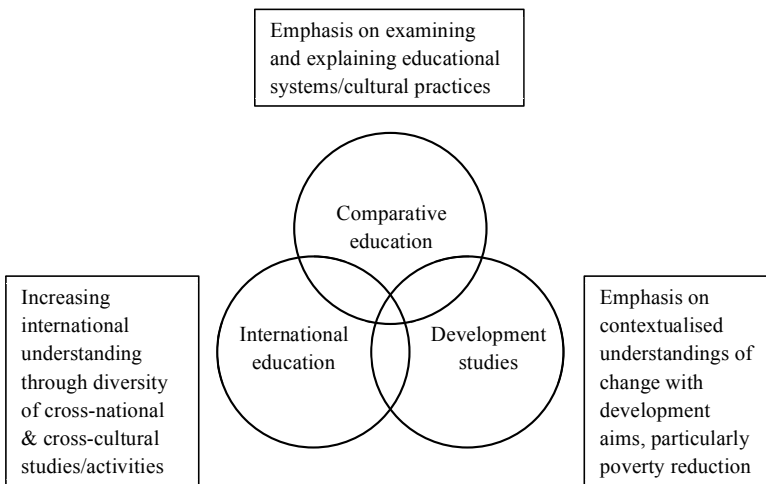
In contrast to the obvious dangers of paradigm wars and over-specialisation, the benefits of a more 'dialogic' approach are illustrated in

Figure 1.1. This Figure draws directly on the above analysis, showing the moveable and overlapping nature of the intersections between comparative, development and international education. A dialogic approach means exploring «ideas and evidence in the intersections and overlaps, recognising, respecting and learning from robust lines of inquiry where they conflict as well as where they converge» (706).

In this analysis of the interactions between comparative, international and development education, the authors draw attention to two sub-areas (higher education and vocational education and training); however, they make no mention of the specific arena of *adult* education and learning. This may well reflect the fact that the latter largely emerges from rather different traditions: for example, development adult education tends to feature through the work of bodies such the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Deutsche Volkshochschule Verband (DVV [German Association of Folk High Schools; German Adult Education Association]). This issue of different traditions is considered in the next section.

2. *Comparative adult education and learning*

There have been, and remain, different views and some lively debates on the extent to which comparative adult education and learning forms, or does not form, a distinctive disciplinary arena in its own right in terms of methods, themes, purposes (Reischmann and Bron Jr 2008; DIE 2016; Field, Künzel and Schemmann 2016). The two sides of the debate can be characterised as follows: on the one hand, in many European countries there was historically a close connection between social purpose, emancipatory adult education and social movements of different kinds (for example, feminist, socialist, ecological), providing an explicit value base from which one tradition of comparative adult education springs. On the other, there are academic benefits to be gained from drawing on 'parent' disciplines (sociology, psychology, organisational theory, economics, history, political science and the like) to investigate the diverse field of adult education and learning, opening opportunities for theoretically grounded inter-disciplinary research.

In definitional terms, however, a succinct and widely used definition is that provided by Charters and Hilton (1989: 3):

> Comparative study is not the mere placing of data side by side [...] such juxtaposition is only the prior requisite for comparison. At the next stage one attempts to identify the similarities and differences between the aspects under study... the real value of comparative study emerges

only from […] the attempts to understand why the differences and similarities occur and what their significance is for adult education and the countries under examination.

In terms of purposes, a review of the literature by Nuissl and Pielorz (2008) identifies four main objectives of comparative adult education:
1. Benchmarking: to help locate national or regional strategic social and economic systems in comparison to other nations.
2. Learning from 'abroad': to better reflect and understand national/regional situations.
3. Transfer of knowledge and procedures: to help explore whether actions and strategies that appear to solve shared problems, might potentially be transferable.
4. Fostering of cooperation: to promote links between governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but also individual institutions/agencies such as adult education providers, universities, training bodies and the like.

In the context of Figure 1.1 above, these objectives map well onto the overlapping area between comparative and development education: a focus on creating and sharing knowledge, but also with a strong connection back to a particular value base and application within the fields of policy and practice. This reflects the social-purpose background from which, as mentioned above, one strong tradition of adult education and associated research emerged – as will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Drawing on a classic schema by Noah and Eckstein (1969), a summary of the development of purposes and approaches in comparative adult education is given below.

First 'travellers' tales': these are reflections of individual scholars which draw on international experience – for example, attending conferences, visiting research centres, or sites of adult education and learning in different countries. The emphasis is frequently on policy and practice in the sense of lessons learnt and examples of 'good practice'. The quality of such work can vary widely: ranging from personal anecdote to providing a stimulus for major conceptual leaps.

Second, single country reports: this type of work tends to be largely descriptive, outlining, for example, the state of adult education in a particular country.

Third, juxtaposition: while individual countries may be described, the analysis focuses on some particular dimension of adult education and learning, for example, providers such as adult education centres, community education, trade unions, employers or higher education institutions; or a particular cohort of learners, for example, women, older learners,

rural communities, unemployed people or immigrant communities; or a particular mode of learning, for example, e-learning, evening classes or work-based learning. Of this approach, Titmus (1999), an influential figure in comparative adult education and learning, suggested that expert readers would themselves draw the comparative implications by relating the research to their own knowledge of the equivalent situation in their own countries.

Fourth, reports from international organisations: bodies such as the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank and the EU are not only important sources of data, but, as I discuss elsewhere, are playing an increasingly important role in shaping scholarly comparative research agendas – not least in countries where resources to undertake large scale empirical social science research are limited.

The focus of the definitions and analysis considered thus far have related almost entirely to comparisons between countries. In the context of contemporary globalisation, however, the next section considers the important question as to whether countries (nation states) retain the salience they once had as *the* key unit for comparative analysis is considered.

3. Socio-political context: globalisation, the state and public policy

As has been well established, globalisation has formed a key element shaping the economic, social and public policy context for adult education and learning over the last half a century or so (for example, Holford, Jarvis and Griffin 1998; Field 2006; Arnove, Torres and Franz 2015).

Four key features of contemporary globalisation stand out: first, an underpinning neoliberal ideology and the shift of this particular view of the world from a rather marginal economic theory, into the mainstream 'common sense' perspective on economy and society in most developed states; second, the growth of in-country and international mobility and migration (whether forced or by choice) with associated complex patterns of cross-cultural diversity, engagement, integration and conflict; third, the expansion of multi-national corporate organisations and increasingly embedded economic interdependence; and, fourth, technological development and fast moving global media changes related both to the speed and the nature of communications and global interconnections.

Of course, globalisation in one sense is not a new phenomenon. There have been quasi- global economic, social and cultural structures since at least the 17th century. The manifestations and implications of contemporary globalisation are however qualitatively different and can be viewed as a tension between two extremes: on the one side, the potential

for enormous public and individual benefits, and, on the other, signifi-
cant dangers. Building on his work on the concept of cosmopolitanism,
these two ends of the spectrum are well summarised by the philosopher
Kwame Anthony Appiah (2008: 87):

> Only in the last few centuries, as every human community has gradu-
> ally been drawn into a single web of trade and a global network of in-
> formation, have we come to a point where each of us can realistically
> imagine contacting any other of our seven billion fellow humans and
> sending that person something worth having: a radio, an antibiotic, a
> good idea. Unfortunately, we can now also send, through negligence as
> easily as malice, things that will cause harm: a virus, an airborne pol-
> lutant, a bad idea. And the possibilities of good and of ill are multiplied
> beyond all measure when it comes to policies carried out by govern-
> ments in our name. Together, we can ruin poor farmers by dumping our
> subsidized grain into their markets, cripple industries by punitive tariffs,
> deliver weapons that will kill thousands upon thousands. Together, we
> can raise standards of living by adopting new policies on trade and aid,
> prevent or treat diseases with vaccines and pharmaceuticals, take meas-
> ures against global climate change, encourage resistance to tyranny and
> a concern for the worth of each human life.

From the perspective of the central concern of this book – compara-
tive adult education and learning – two important aspects can be dis-
tilled from decades of debate about the impact of globalisation in its
contemporary form: first, the potential for the increased significance of
comparative research; and, second, a questioning of the relevance of the
conceptualisation and the reality of countries (nation states) as *the* pri-
mary units for comparative analysis.

From one perspective it can be hypothesised that the growth of global
regions (for example, the EU) along with supra-national corporations, in-
ternational agencies, mobility and migration and dynamic forms of com-
munication, has weakened the significance of nation states. Even in the
educational arena, for example, many universities (public and private) have
developed a global presence which may be quite removed from their origi-
nal 'parent' national home (Teichler 2004, Marginson and van der Wende
2006; Scott 2009).

If the conceptualisation and debate about the nature and impact of glo-
balisation has been so dominant in recent years, what are the implications
for comparative educational research? As Dale (2000: 89) puts it 'inter-
pretations of the consequences for the idea of the autonomous nation-
state of economic and political globalisation have placed the importance,
even the survival, of the state in question'. In this context what is need-
ed, perhaps, is a new «cosmopolitan sociology». This term has been pro-
posed by Beck and Beck–Gernsheim (2009: 25), who define it as follows:

a sociology that gets rid of 'methodological nationalism' and takes glo-
bality and (human) social life on planet Earth seriously. A cosmopolitan
sociology differs from a universalistic one by starting, not from anything
supposedly general, but from global variability, global interconnected-
ness, and global intercommunication.

Such a perspective does indeed present difficulties, because so much
comparative educational research tends to be based on assumptions about
the importance of individual states as the key unit of comparative analy-
sis. On the other hand, there is an argument that much of the discussion
about the declining importance of states has been exaggerated and that, in
relation to educational policy, the state remains a key determining force.

> Discussions of the effect of globalization on education make even more
> crucial our use of state theory as the framework for understanding these
> debates. Without an explicit theory of the state, we have little or no ba-
> sis for understanding whether the many analyses of the relationship be-
> tween globalization and education are useful or whether the definition
> of globalization they use makes sense. (Carnoy 2006: 569)

To take a concrete example of an analysis which seeks to use theories of
the state to analyse comparative data on a theme relevant to adult educa-
tion and learning, namely, social cohesion, Green, Janmaat and Han (2009)
draw on Western political history and associated intellectual traditions to
develop a typology of three major discourses. First a *liberal* discourse: this
places the most emphasis on an active civil society, particularly at the local
level, while the role of the central state is played down, along with its insti-
tutional roles for providing welfare and social protection and for promoting
equality through re-distribution. Second a *republican* discourse: this empha-
sises the state rather than civil society as the state promotes social cohesion
through its institutions for welfare, social protection and re-distribution.
Here the state also plays a role in disseminating (through public educa-
tion) a common (national) identity and a broad set of shared values which
emphasise belonging to, and active participation in, a political community
at the national, rather than local level. Third a *social democratic* discourse:
this is similar to the republican discourse except that there is an additional
emphasis on equality. On the basis of these historical discourses, the au-
thors seek to develop a comparative typology of contemporary welfare re-
gimes. The point here is not the robustness of this particular typology, it is
simply that such an analysis could not be attempted without a underlying
conception of the state. Further, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, given
the diversity of providers of adult education and learning opportunities
(public, private, NGO, employers, etc.), the role played by the state tends
to be quite different from the function it serves in regulating, funding and
inspecting formal educational provision for children and young people.

4. Isomorphism vs heterogeneity: the role of international actors in adult education and learning

Underpinning much of this debate, and an area where comparative research potentially has an important contribution to make, lies a central question: to what extent does there appear to be a growing homogeneity across countries (that is, over and above individual nation states) and/or global regions in terms of educational policy and educational practices? Here indeed is a fruitful field for investigation of the dynamics of inter-action and mediation between different levels: macro, miso and micro. Between, for example, the international, the national, the local, regional, and the institutional/organisational levels.

One body of research points to the growing uniformity and homogeneity of educational policy, or, as it has also been termed, «isomorphism» (Meyer *et al.* 2007). In this regard, the role of intergovernmental bodies (the OECD, the World Bank, and so on) as some of the main 'carriers' of global ideologies is especially important (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). In their different ways, and with different resources and values, policy developments at the national level can be influenced through a number of mechanisms. Four of the principal influencing mechanisms are listed here:

1. Agenda setting: through shaping ideas and discourses.
2. Peer review: drawing on international cohorts of experts.
3. Data generation, publication and dissemination.
4. Policy steering: though the use of targeted funding levers.

The example of the OECD is interesting as it is an inter-governmental body which does not have funding as a lever through which to influence and shape policy and practice – in contrast, for example, to the EU or the World Bank. Rather, it operates through indirect mechanisms including agenda setting, international review, generation of large-scale sets of data and dissemination of results. In this sense, it has been argued that a step change has taken place as 'comparing' has shifted from being a 'method' to actually becoming part of policy formulation and development as «the expert discourse builds its proposals through "comparative" strategies that tend to impose "naturally" similar answers in the different national settings» (Nóvoa 2002: 144).

In its role as a policy actor, the OECD has built up a reputation for generation of robust statistical data and the associated development of comparative educational performance measures. As Grek (2010: 398) puts it 'OECD-defined and OECD-collected data on education systems in Europe are then intersected with EU data, contributing to the creation of a governable space of comparison and commensurability.' This new type of 'governance by comparison' may represent a marked shift

over time from an approach which treated each unit (e.g. state, region or sector) as distinctive, towards an approach which reflects a trend towards global homogeneity.

A detailed analysis by Clancy (2016) of OECD reviews of education in Ireland over time supports the thesis that the «"comparative turn" represents a change in methodology. In the past, the OECD tended to focus on states individually, acknowledging differences and idiosyncrasies: it now compares states with each other against standardized criteria» (Clancy 2016: 5).

For some, the cumulative impact of international policy agencies is that national policies tend to become more similar (isomorphic) as they march to the music of the «transnational drummer» (Ramirez 2006).

There is a counter argument to this analysis of growing global homogeneity at the policy level. This type of analysis highlights the importance of social and cultural mediation and agency (at whatever level) reflecting heterogeneity and diversity. From this perspective, a great deal of comparative educational research focuses at the level of policies and structures rather than at the level of actual implementation. This potentially underestimates not only the lack of a linear relationship between policy and practice, but also ignores both unintended consequences and the possibility of active resistance. This perspective carries important methodological implications as it points to the importance of in-depth, qualitative studies in order to obtain a better understanding of the ways in which high level policies are interpreted in practice. This case is well illustrated by the example below.

> Following my early research in Papua New Guinea, I argued that qualitative research strategies had an important role to play in contributing to educational policy-making and theory, especially in developing countries where large-scale policies and innovations were often being adopted in the absence of any research on the realities of schooling at the chalk face. I suggested that there was too much emphasis placed upon policies, plans and structures, at the expense of research on the actual processes of implementation of these in practice where the role of culture – and especially that of teachers – was a crucial influence. The high ecological validity of qualitative research in natural settings enabled issues of unintended outcomes and processes to be addressed in ways that proved much more difficult in the more traditional evaluation techniques of questionnaire surveys or brief fact-finding visits to schools. (Vulliamy 2004: 266).

These debates about the intersections of different levels of analysis – specifically between the global, the national and the local – which have been important for two decades or so in the wider context of comparative research, are reflected in the more circumscribed world of comparative adult education and learning. If the nation state typically constituted one of the principal units of analysis, what are the implications of what has

been termed 'the turn to the learner' in the policy domain? In a recent analysis of developments in comparative adult education and learning, Field, Künzel and Schemmann (2016: 128) suggest that much contemporary research has «been accompanied in our field by the widespread adoption of in-depth studies of learner identities, often drawing on individual life narratives as the main source of evidence.» They suggest that this type of qualitative method, focusing as it does on individual learners and their diversity of biographies and pathways, perhaps may not easily lend itself to comparisons between entire populations.

5. Conclusion

At the outset, this chapter discussed the role of 'parent' social science disciplines (sociology, psychology, history, political science, etc.) from which comparative perspectives and methodologies emerge. In turn, these methodologies are applied to consideration of particular arenas of study – such as adult education and learning. Figure 1.2 below is a schematic diagram of the interrelationships between these three levels – discipline, comparative methodologies and the arena of study. It is a simplified schema as it leaves out a feedback loop: disciplines are not fixed but evolve and change over time. This is a process to which, interestingly, practice and research in adult education has made a particular contribution in areas such as women's studies, cultural studies and labour history (Fieldhouse 1996; Barr 1999, 2007; Slowey 2010). By acting at the margins of formal institutions (especially universities) adult education has played a distinctive role and «provided a vehicle for new disciplines to be brought in from the margins to the mainstream of university teaching and research, and thus the university's academic knowledge has interacted with individual adult learners and broader social movements» (Cunningham *et al.* 2009: 2).

Figure 1.2 – Schematic Diagram of Interrelationships Between Discipline, Methodology and Arena of Study.

If disciplines provide the theoretical base for comparative adult education and learning, then much of the quantitative empirical base in recent decades has, for a variety of reasons, been provided by international and intergovernmental agencies. This chapter has also discussed the influential role of such agencies, exploring conceptions of globalisation and the state in shaping the contemporary research agenda in comparative adult education and learning.

These are issues that are pursued further in Chapter 2 as I trace some key historical and conceptual milestones. The question of levels of analysis relevant for new approaches to comparative adult education and learning are explored in Chapter 3 while Chapter 4 returns to a more detailed examination of the roles of the major international and intergovernmental agencies.

Selected Readings

David Phillips and Michele Schweisfurth (2014)
This text extract introduces some key concepts in the field of comparative education, exploring also the relationship with development education and the contemporary role of the nation state. Authors are leading scholars David Phillips, Emeritus Professor of Comparative Education at the University of Oxford, UK, and Michele Schweisfurth, Professor of Comparative and International Education at the University of Glasgow, UK.

Phillips D., Schweisfurth M. (2014), *Comparative and International Education: An Introduction to Theory, Method, and Practice* (2nd ed.), Bloomsbury, London.

The study of education in increasingly globalised contexts inevitably draws us towards comparison. Instant access to complex and up-to-date information on most aspects of foreign systems of education makes the initial task of comparison more straightforward than it has ever been. The work in education of international organizations – principally the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the World Bank – is widely disseminated and available both in print and online. Communication over distance has never been easier through a plethora of electronic means. International contact not only as a result of ease of travel but also as a consequence of political and economic agreement in various configurations further facilitates knowledge of 'elsewhere', of 'the other' – and increasingly 'elsewhere' is less foreign, 'the other' is more familiar, and individuals have identities which embrace them all. And comparison, an instinctive intellectual response to anything requiring analysis, is an activity that aids our opinion-forming and decision-making on an everyday basis. We are all comparatists now.
[…]
Comparative education, as we shall see, has a long history, with its origins in the early years of the nineteenth century as states in Europe and elsewhere were taking first steps towards the creation of national systems of education. Reference to what was happening elsewhere in terms of educational provision was a natural feature of the early policy debates. But it took some considerable time before those engaged in making comparisons began to systematize their activities, to think in terms of a theory of comparative education and its accompanying methods[2].

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[2] P. 1.

[…]

Comparative studies are usually (though not exclusively) international in nature, and international studies are implicitly comparative. The fields are interdependent, and a disservice is done to both if they are regarded as discrete and so separated for the purposes, for example, of the syllabuses of university courses. A comparativist should be aware of the full range of issues with which international education is concerned; a specialist in international education should be informed about the comparative inquiry in generating and testing the theories widely in use.

[…]

Comparativists cover a huge range of topics which demand expertise in many areas of academic inquiry. What brings them together in an identifiably coherent way is the common attempt at comparison, and comparison is a method used by various disciplines rather than an activity which can conceivably be described in itself.

[…]

Comparativists, operating as they do within a multidimensional subject, are essentially generalists, and among the many competences expected of them is a knowledge of and sympathy for the methods of such other kinds of inquiry.[3]

[…]

The study of the relationship between education and development has long been an important dimension of comparative and international education. In fact, as we have seen, the term 'international education' has at times been used to delineate that part of the field devoted to education in the developing world. Within this area of inquiry, a number of important theories linked to the broader field of development studies have been developed.

Underpinning the existence of this sub-field is the assumption that there is a positive relationship between an educated population and national development in all its forms, and that education can be used as a 'weapon' against poverty and other forms of underdevelopment. Education is seen as contributing to the public good, and therefore as deserving of the allocation of public investment, and in need of public control. The ideological stance needs to be unpacked. What do we mean by development? Who should define what we mean by progress, and what power issues are at stake? In what ways can education contribute to the development process? What kind of education is likely to do this? What theories help to explain these intersections of education, development, and power?

[3] p. 12.

These questions are of academic interest, but in application their resolution has literally life or death implications for people in poorer parts of the world. Research findings and theories generated within different branches of the education and development sub-field feed into the policy process at many levels. Perhaps the most significant of these is the international 'business' of aid to education, which is both a consumer and a producer of educational research linked to development and developing countries.

The dichotomization of developing versus developed countries has already been problematized. But this sub-field is sufficiently significant that the special issues of education in developing countries and regions need to be explored. It is important to note that the observations and theories pertaining to development discussed here are of significance to all nations, less or more developed, although the nature of that significance may vary. How investment in education may lead to national economic growth, for example, is a process that all governments would dearly love to control. However, for a more developed country at one of the spectrum, the United States or United Kingdom for example, the main concern may be a matter of its own national policy on access to higher education, with a view to fuelling growth in highly skilled employment in post-industrial sectors. In contrast, for a less developed country, towards the other end of the spectrum, including most states in Sub-Saharan Africa for example, the focus may be on negotiations with aid donor agencies on how to increase access to primary school, in line with global pressures regarding Education for All, in order to raise basic standards of literacy in the majority of the population, with the reduction of poverty as a primary goal. Increasingly, as primary enrolments increase, the next stages of education, particularly lower secondary schooling, come into focus of attention.

While individuals feel the impact of development, it is generally analysed as a phenomenon for the common national good and as a goal for governments to pursue through their own policies (sometimes in partnership with international donors). This discussion therefore uses the nation-state as the main unit of development. This, of course, is also problematic. As we have noted before, there are pockets of relative wealth and privilege in underdeveloped countries, and pockets of poverty and social deprivation in the wealthiest states.

[…]

A further weakness of using the nation-state as the unit of analysis is evident in the phenomenon of globalization. As the world figuratively becomes smaller, the policies and development successes and failures of each nation depend more and more on those of other states. The impact of changes on national or aid policy on individual countries becomes more and more dependent on global connections and flows of trade and aid […]. Despite these caveats, both development and education still

largely matter for the state, and so it is national development which we will address in the main[4].

[…]

[The authors then go on to discuss various theories designed to interpret global developments, one of which is liberation theory.]

Liberation theory prioritizes the moral obligation to side with the oppressed of the world, and to seek development through freedom from this domination. Education can play a role in oppression, by dulling minds and reinforcing the status quo. Freire labelled this approach the 'banking' concept of education.

The right kind of education can serve to 'conscientize' the oppressed, giving them the opportunity and skills of analysis, through dialogic approaches to learning, to awaken critical consciousness and ultimately to reconstruct society. Freire focused on adult education, and indeed his approaches have been very influential in shaping approaches to adult learning in developing countries, including the 'REFLECT' literacy programme practised by the NGO Action Aid in communities in developing countries. This programme is based on core elements which include democratic space, grounding in existing knowledge, power awareness, and the use of participatory tools.

A less politicized approach, but with an emphasis on individual emancipation, the capability approach as a framework for understanding development has become increasingly widely-employed in recent years. It helps to explain the link between education's role in nurturing freedom for individuals, and democracy for a country/society. The concept of capability within this theory is not the narrow understandings associated with skills such as literacy or numeracy (as useful as these might be). Capabilities are defined as the functions, opportunities and freedoms people possess that enable them to pursue goals they value and to bring about changes that are meaningful of them. It is therefore, like liberation theory, concerned with the development of personal agency, as a key to the improvement of quality of life[5].

[…]

Explanation involves the complex issue – of central concern to philosophy (and especially to the philosophy of science) – of causality. Causality involves what are called *universal statements* in the form of hypotheses, and *singular statements* which relate to the specific conditions of phenomena. In a field like education, both types of statements are particularly problematic since proofs are different to determine. If, in a given set of circumstances (x), there are a clear set of results (y), it is not logically the case that y is

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[4] pp. 75-77.
[5] pp. 90-91.

explained by x. The results (y) might be chance results, or they might be explained by factors that have nothing to do with x. Observations and experiments which purport to demonstrate that certain conditions produce certain results and that the results are therefore explained by the conditions are in danger of falling prey to the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy or are susceptible to the so-called 'Hawthorne effect' (which says, in effect, that experiments succeed by virtue of their being experiments)

Comparative studies that present series of disconnected data easily fall into the trap of implying that certain observable features of educational provision are in some way the result of certain other observable features. Typical here is the association of economic performance with aspects of education systems. If a country is performing well economically (something that can be demonstrated by means of hard data), investigators might try to identify aspects of educational provision in that country which appear interestingly different from what can be observed in other, less economically successful countries. Such an aspect might be a developed system of vocational education and training. It is then an easy step to argue that economic success (the output) is the consequence of vocational education and training (the input), especially if, over time, there is no other obvious explanation for the successful economy. The high scores of pupils in some countries in the OECD's PISA surveys naturally provoke attempts at explanation in terms, for example, of the structures of secondary education (a common system? Diversified provision?), but we should be very wary of explanations that depend on the association of such variables with outcomes. It might well be the case, for example, that Germany's relatively poor performance in PISA is a consequence of that federal country's hierarchical – for the most part tripartite – secondary school systems, but this has to remain at the level of speculation rather than proof. We should also be wary of the judgement of researchers who do not have intimate knowledge or experience of the processes of education: there is indeed a worrying tendency following publication of large-scale studies of pupil attainment to focus on the outcomes and to attempt to explain them in simplistic terms, rather than through detailed attention to the processes of teaching and learning that have preceded the tests (and which the tests might not in fact be measuring in all cases).

[…]

Comparative education method

We turn now to a consideration of method. Much effort has been expanded on discussion of appropriate methods in comparative education, and there has been considerable dispute among those taking differing positions on the subject. As we were discussing this chapter a prominent British comparativist asked is 'Is there a method!'.

What distinguishes the work of comparativists from that of other educationists – and what therefore distinguishes the approaches they use to research – is the obvious fact that for the most part they are concerned essentially with other cultural/countries. Aside from this concern with education 'elsewhere' and the question as to how comparisons might realistically be made, comparativists use all the research methods that other investigators of aspects of education employ in their research.

They can therefore call upon a huge body of established approaches specific to the particular task of comparison. The essential questions are: What methods and conditions are appropriate to ensure adequate understanding of other cultures from a vantage point outside of those cultures? What does the act of comparison consist in and how might it best be undertaken?[6]

MARTIN CARNOY AND DIANA RHOTEN (2002)
In this text extract from a Guest Editorial in Comparative Education Review, Martin Carnoy, Professor at Stanford University, and previous President of the Comparative International Education Society and Diana Rhoten provide an overview of key debates on the role of the state in comparative educational research.

Carnoy M., Rhoten D. (2002), *What Does Globalization Mean for Educational Change? A Comparative Approach*, «Comparative Education Review», XLVI (1),1-9.

This issue of the *Comparative Education Review* (CER) takes as its theme the relationship between globalization and educational change. Linking economic and social change to changes in how societies transmit knowledge is a relatively new approach to studying education. Before the 1950s, comparative education focused mainly on the philosophical and cultural origins of national educational systems. This approach saw educational change as rooted in new educational philosophies or theories – new conceptions of what knowledge should be transmitted and of organizing knowledge transmission – usually promulgated by individual visionaries. In the 1960s and 1970s, a rash of historical studies challenged this view. They situated educational reform in economic and social change. Some of them went further, using approaches based in political economy, world systems theory, and theories of neocolonialism and underdevelopment to show that economic imperatives on a global scale were a major force in shaping education world-wide […]. Others interpreted such change through an institutional lens, arguing that the convergence toward accepted models of modernity has resulted in a process of educational isomorphism within and across countries

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[6] pp. 108-109.

[…]

Today, the notion that economic and social change affect educational structures and content is old hat. Comparative education has incorporated these models, and many studies have tied educational reform to economic and social change at an international level. Nevertheless, the current phenomenon of globalization provides a new empirical challenge as much as it does a new theoretical frame for comparative education. Globalization is a force reorganizing the world's economy, and the main resources for that economy are increasingly knowledge and information. If knowledge and information, usually transmitted and shaped by national and local institutions, are fundamental to the development of the global economy, and the global economy, in turn, shapes the nature of educational opportunities and institutions, how should we draw the directional arrows in our analysis? To complicate the situation further, global economics and ideology are increasingly intertwined in international institutions that promulgate particular strategies for educational change. To what degree does educational change represent regional, national, or local responses to global economic restructuring, and to what degree do these changes represent international agencies' intentions regarding these responses?

One point is fairly clear. If knowledge is fundamental to globalization, globalization should also have a profound impact on the transmission of knowledge. Some have argued that this has not occurred, casting doubt on the capacity of globalization to permeate knowledge production and transmission influenced by local culture.

It is true that education appears to have changed little at the classroom level in most countries – even in those nations most involved in the global economy and the information age. Beyond computers being occasionally used in classrooms, teaching methods and national curricula remain largely intact. Even one of the most important educational reforms associated with globalization, the decentralization of educational administration and finance, seems to have little or no effect on educational delivery in classrooms, despite its implementation.

However, this is a very narrow interpretation of the effects of globalization on education. The combination of economic restructuring in the world economy and the powerful ideological conceptions of how educational delivery needs to be changed, spread by international institutions as a consequence of the globalization process, is having a significant impact on educational systems worldwide. We need to ask how this larger ideological package – which includes, but is not limited to, decentralization and privatization, choice and accountability, testing and assessment – affects education. The way knowledge is delivered in the classroom is an important aspect of knowledge production, and the classroom seems largely untouched. But the classroom is only one part of the knowledge production process, and even it is being subtly but ultimately transformed

by the forces of globalization. In assessing globalization's true relationship to educational change, we need to know how globalization and its ideological packaging affect the overall delivery of schooling, from transnational paradigms, to national policies, to local practices.

Globalization and the state

At the heart of the relationship between globalization and education in the current historical conjuncture is the relationship between the globalized political economy and the nation-state. Is the power of the national state diminished by globalization? Yes and no. Yes, because increasing global economic competition makes the nation-state focus on economic policies that improve global competitiveness at the expense of policies that stabilize the current configuration of the domestic political economy and/or possibly social cohesion. Yes, because the nation–state is compelled to make the national economy attractive for the mass of capital that moves globally in the 'space of flows', and that may mean a shift of public spending and monetary policy from measures that favor workers and consumers to those benefiting financial interests. Globalization forces nation-states to focus more on acting as economic growth promoters for their national economies than as protectors of the national identity or a nationalist project. Consequently, the project of the nation-state tends to become largely limited to enhancing increases in aggregate material gain measured nationally by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Trade Organization (WTO) and much less to promoting equal treatment experienced nationally by various ethnic groups living within a country's boundaries. Increasingly, the state shifts power up to regional organizations or down to local governments and is less and less able to equalize the interests of various identities represented in the nation-state. It pushes the problems of ethnic conflict to the local level and increasingly limits its responsibility to develop the economic environment in which individuals can increase their material well-being. This produces new social divisions within the nation-state, new social networks across nation–states, and new social movements against the nation–state.
[…]

Globalization and educational change

[…] In financial terms, most governments are under pressure to reduce the growth of public spending on education and to find other sources of funding for the expected expansion of their educational systems.

In labor market terms, governments are simultaneously under pressure to attract foreign capital, and this means providing a ready supply

of skilled labor. This translates into pressure to increase the average level of education in the labor force. The payoff to higher levels of education is rising worldwide as a result of the shifts of economic production to knowledge-intensive products and processes, as well as because governments implement policies that increase income inequality. As relative incomes for higher-educated labor rise, the demand for university education increases, pushing governments to expand their higher education, and, correspondingly, to increase the number of secondary school graduates ready to attend postsecondary schools. In countries that were previously resistant to providing equal access to education for young women, the need for more highly educated low-cost labor tends to expand women's educational opportunities. All these pressures conflict with reforms that attempt to reduce public spending on education.

In educational terms, the quality of national educational systems is increasingly being compared internationally. This has placed increased emphasis on math and science curriculum, standards, and testing, and on meeting standards by changing the way education is delivered. Testing and standards are part of a broader effort to increase accountability by measuring knowledge production and using such measures to assess education workers (teachers) and managers.

Information technology is gradually being introduced into educational systems, partly to try to expand the quantity of education at lower cost through distance education and partly to deliver higher-quality education (at higher cost) through computer-assisted instruction and the use of the Internet. Although almost all countries are at the very beginning of using such new technology, its future use in education cannot be underestimated, particularly because of its ability to link students in the smallest towns of every country with the rest of the world.

Globalized information networks mean transformation of world culture. But globalization also means that many groups feel marginalized by the market values of this new culture. Such groups struggle against the globalized economy by asserting cultural values that may themselves be global (e.g. traditional fundamentalist religion, on the one hand, and postmodern environmentalism and feminism, on the other) but are, at the same time, profoundly anti-market. This constitutes a new kind of struggle over the meaning and value of knowledge.

Which of these changes are introduced and particularly how they are introduced depends on regional, national, and even local social, economic, and political conditions that mediate the implementation of responses to global pressures for reform […].

Thus, educational changes in response to globalization share certain defining parameters but still vary greatly across regions, nations, and localities. The other side of that variation is an almost obvious inference: policies prescribed by the same paradigm but applied in different con-

texts produce different practices – so different in some cases – that it is difficult to imagine that they were the result of the same policy. By ignoring differences in contextual capacity and culture at the national, regional, and local levels, globalization has resulted in some unintended and unexpected consequences for educational practice that in some cases have contributed to the deterioration of quality even when the objective has been improvement.

Paolo Federighi (2013)
This text extract by Paolo Federighi, Professor of Educational Psychology and Head of the Department of Education and Psychology of the University of Florence, Italy, illustrates the use of comparative research outcomes to help inform policy development with a view to enhancing opportunities for adult learning. The analysis is based on a review of the findings of several EU-funded research projects under the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes for Research. While the contributions of individuals and employers towards the costs of adult learning represent the bulk of investment, the socio-political factors (country, region, city) shape the likelihood of accessing learning opportunities, confirming the continuing importance of public policies and the potential role of the state.

Federighi P. (2013), *Adult and continuing education in Europe: Using public policy to secure a growth in skills*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Executive summary

Adult and continuing education has the dual function of contributing to employability and economic growth, on the one hand, and responding to broader societal challenges, in particular promoting social cohesion, on the other. Companies and families support important investments that have, to date, ensured significant growth in both skills and the ability of the European population to innovate. Thanks to this commitment, Europe today has a wealth of organisations specialising in adult and continuing education. The sector has grown in importance, not only as an increasingly significant player in the economy but also in terms of its capacity to respond to the demand for learning from the knowledge economy. Adult and continuing education has a critical role to play in ensuring Europe copes with the phenomenon of educational exclusion, which, repeated year after year, generation after generation, undermines social cohesion and restricts the growth of employment. The prevalence of private intervention has created a situation in which participation in adult and continuing education is unevenly distributed, offering particular encouragement to certain groups (such as people with high levels of education or favoured social and cultural origin, and those

employed in the knowledge-intensive productive sectors) while less advantaged groups are doubly disadvantaged.

Demographic dynamics mean that the population, and hence the labour force, in the 45–65 age group will increase in the next decades, while the population aged between 15 and 44 will decrease. This phenomenon, linked to the increasing number of knowledge and skill-intensive jobs, makes adult education even more relevant.

Nevertheless, the factor that, more than others, determines the likelihood of accessing learning opportunities is geography: the city, region and country of residence. This confirms the importance of past and present policies and, hence, the potential role of the state.

[…]

Given this complex setting, research provides tools and data for helping policy-makers define effective policy measures. This publication is a review of the findings of several EU-funded research projects under the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes for Research.

The conclusions of the research projects reviewed in this publication propose a number of policy priorities to support adult and continuing education and to harvest the potential of existing scientific production. This paper surveys these conclusions and guides policy-makers in developing policy interventions which both support the growth of adult and continuing education and exploit the wealth of research and research tools available [7].

[…]

Conclusions

Ensuring the existence of a skills supply that meets the needs of the productive system while achieving an adequate level of social cohesion depends on citizens having the opportunity to develop their skills when they enter the job market and, thereafter, for the rest of their lives.

Adult and continuing education responds to structural concerns and widespread need. This is why demand for adult and continuing education has grown between 2007 and 2011, in spite of the economic crisis. There have been a small number of exceptions, and, of course, demand has grown at different intensities in different places, but it is nevertheless important to note that this is a general trend that has concerned both low-skilled and high-skilled citizens.

One reason for this is the growing number of providers. Considering just the work-based training sector, training providers represent between

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[7] p. 7.

0.4% and 1% of companies. It is a much vaster field than the traditional perception of adult and continuing education would lead us to imagine.

Nevertheless, the dimensions of the sector are not such as to avoid distribution problems […]. In fact, already today adult and continuing education has a significant market value – amounting, for example, to €3.2 billion in the Netherlands alone. Participation in adult and continuing education is supported in the main by companies and families. They are the social actors who sustain most of the cost. The state plays a marginal role, which concerns only narrow sections of the population, particularly the less advantaged ones. Companies are the main actor; understandably, since adult and continuing education is a lever for achieving the strategic objectives. For companies, growth of personnel is a goal to be pursued, to some extent, through off-the-job training, but, above all, through on-the-job training. Yet the desired outcomes are not to be attained simply through formal, non-formal and informal training. It is the outcome of the learning potential of each company, that is to say, the content of work, the career prospects offered to personnel, the values shared and the sense of belonging that is created, the benefits, and the culture of training expressed through contracts of employment.

When the intervention of companies is not sufficient, it is the families who intervene. In each country included in the surveys considered, the weight of the families was always at least three times greater than that of the state (the ratio varies from a minimum of 2.7 to a maximum of 14.7).

The prevalence of private intervention has created a situation in which participation in adult and continuing education is unevenly distributed, offering particular encouragement to certain groups, including:
• people with high levels of education;
• employed people;
• those, in particular, employed in the knowledge-intensive productive sectors;
• people with a more favoured social and cultural origin;
• younger people; and
• the non-disadvantaged in general.

Nevertheless, the factor that more than others determines the likelihood of accessing learning opportunities is the city, the region and the country of residence. This confirms the importance of past and present policies and, hence, the potential role of the state.

The dimensions that the market of adult and continuing education has taken on require that public policies take a different approach than that which would usually be considered appropriate to managing a system or public service, administrated in a monopoly or oligopoly regime.

[…]

Policy priorities

The research considered suggests the following policy priorities on the demand front:
- Concentrate public interventions on adopting rules that reduce the economic and social barriers that hamper access to training opportunities for various levels of the population;
- Concentrate the use of public financial resources on rebalancing functions, i.e. directing them to people, companies, territories that, without public intervention, would not find an answer to their growth needs;
- Take on as a priority the sensitive reduction of the number of low-skilled citizens who, without public intervention, would see their conditions of social and work exclusion progressively worsen; and
- Use direct incentives to encourage those who invest in training, and cautiously use forms of taxation, though finalised at training.

The research considered suggests on the following priorities on the offer front:
- Use regulative and financial instruments to promote autonomous initiatives that increase the training potential of companies;
- Promote expansion of the training market by reducing obstacles – including those of an institutional nature – that hamper growth of the training industries, cooperation and competition among the various public and private actors, and eliminate the barriers of monopolistic and oligopolistic regimes;
- Promote the presence of all sizes of training provider: micro, small, medium and large, whether operating in just one territory or on a worldwide level. Variety ensures a greater likelihood of finding pertinent answers to individual training demand and cost containment; and
- Promote improvement of offer quality, making the university system assume duties of initial training of the sector operators and sustaining research orientated to training innovation.

Public policy will be able to recoup spending on orientation in the training market if it can optimise investments. Therefore, policy-makers must define a clear vision of the desirable and possible conditions, and they must adopt policies and measures which evidence suggests will deliver the desired results.

Research priorities

The research which has, over the last decade, supporting adult and continuing education policy, has examined the basic knowledge needs

relative to fields such as the management and improvement of the quality of adult learning, recognition of skills, monitoring systems and orientation. At the same time, we must acknowledge the progress made by certain studies, conducted on an international level, and by the individual research centres of EU and OECD countries. The wealth of data now available demands on-going monitoring and the promotion of forms of cooperation within the framework of large, shared programmes. This would increase the complementarity of investment and the use of the results by policy-makers.

To ensure that government strategies and policies targeting adults are successful, it is vital that they are based on concrete evidence, experience and knowledge about people's situations. Evidence-based policy-making in the field of adult learning calls for comprehensive and comparable data on all key aspects of adult learning, for effective monitoring systems and cooperation between the various agencies, as well as for high-quality research activities […].

The policy results will correspond to expectations only if these policies are founded on evidence, if information and evaluations are consistent, broad and rigorous and, in particular, if they take into account the foreseeable impact of the measures adopted.

Research carried out on a worldwide level has generated sufficient knowledge and know-how to foster policies of adult and continuing education which deliver the desired results. New devices, refined by research in the field of artificial intelligence, can give policy-makers easier access to available scientific knowledge and the possibility of foreseeing the impact of the policy measures that have been adopted.

Research should produce an intelligent decision-support system that facilitates the impact analysis ex-ante of the policy measures for adult and continuing education by gathering and analysing evidence, identifying and diagnosing problems, proposing possible courses of action and evaluating the proposed actions.

Orientating the adult and continuing education market

[…]
the policies of adult and continuing education are largely aimed at orientating only the public component of that market. One of the reasons for this is that the adult and continuing education market is still mostly unknown to public policy, in spite of the fact that it has an important slice of the national economy, with a significant share of turnover and an important number of micro, small and medium training industries.

To address this, research should provide knowledge of the economic make-up of the adult and continuing education market in the 27 EU countries, the fundamental characteristics of the economic actors, the

dynamics that determine its growth or depression, the trends regarding absorption of innovations applied to training (ICT), the processes of market globalisation and the role of the large consultancy and training multinationals.

The results should help us to understand which strategies and policies can ensure more effective governance of adult and continuing education

[…]

The personal and professional growth of people working depends, first of all, on the quality of the job and its learning potential. Research has provided quite an in-depth picture of the factors that determine the learning potential of a workplace, but we still have limited knowledge of the way in which learning potential is activated in different kinds of people.

This implies that we need to study the interconnections between the fundamental factors of people-management policies and their training implications. It means knowing the various ways in which factors interact, among them: the training contents of the work being carried out, the prospects of career development, the benefits of educational importance, compensation policies, the sense of belonging and value sharing.

Research should determine how the combination of these factors can be managed for the personal and professional growth of workers. Likewise, a study should be made of the internal and external factors of a company that determine growth in the ability of individuals and work groups to innovate. In this case too, the end result should be knowledge of the types of public policy that increase people's innovation ability in workplaces[8].

Richard Desjardins (2016)

This is a previously unpublished text, providing a summary overview of a forthcoming publication by Richard Desjardins, Associate Professor of Political Economy of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, USA. Developing the concept of adult learning systems, it illustrates the ways in which significant analytical and empirical developments can be made in the comparative study of adult learning and education through drawing together and sophisticated reworking of large-scale data sets.

Richard Desjardins previously worked at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Education between 2010-2013 on the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and the Skills Strategy, and was Associate Professor in Comparative Social Science at Aarhus University, Denmark. He is joint-editor of the European Journal of Education.

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[8] pp. 86-90.

Cross-national Patterns Associated with Adult Learning Systems

This contribution summarizes some of the analysis and findings found in the book entitled *Political Economy of Adult Learning Systems* authored by Desjardins (London: Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming 2017). It first introduces what is meant by Adult Learning Systems (ALS), and discusses the coordination of problems associated with ALS. It then provides a brief overview of some of the most salient patterns of participation across countries and summarizes some of the main findings from the book. The book contains a much more extended discussion of cross-national patterns associated with adult learning systems, and provides extended analysis on patterns of participation, patterns of outcomes and patterns of coordination.

What is meant by Adult Learning Systems?

Adult Learning Systems (ALS) refer to the mass of organized learning opportunities available to adults along with their underlying structures and stakeholders that shape their organization and governance. Organized adult learning is defined as any opportunities undertaken by non-traditional students beyond the age of compulsory schooling. Furthermore, non-traditional students are adults who return to the formal system to complete qualifications beyond the normative age typically associated with those qualifications or tend to be over the age of 25 with few exceptions (e.g. MA or PhD up to the age of 30). ALS also include non-formal learning activities but the formal vs non-formal divide is not very useful in a cross-national setting since ALS now vary greatly in the extent to which they feature links between otherwise non-formal activities and formal qualifications, or alternatively between Adult Basic (and general) Education (ABE/AGE); Adult Higher Education (AHE); Adult Vocational Education (AVE); or Adult Liberal Education (ALE). ABE/AGE typically involve formal education undertaken by non-traditional students which correspond to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 1, 2 or 3. AHE typically involve formal education undertaken by non-traditional students which correspond to ISCED 5 or 6. AVE can involve formal education undertaken by non-traditional students which correspond to ISCED 3b, 3c, 4, or 5b, but also non-formal education that has no links to the formal qualification system. The extent of formal vs non-formal AVE is the source of greatest variation in provision across countries. Indeed, while ABE/AGE can be specifically intended for non-traditional students, AHE and formal AVE are in many countries hardly distinguishable from the regular system where traditional and non-traditional students attain the same qualifications from the same institutions. ALE in contrast tends to be non-formal but in highly flexible

systems such as in Denmark, even ALE courses may be linked to qualifications via a modular and flexible approach. The degree of openness of
the formal education system to non-traditional students as well as the level of integration between ABE-AVE-AHE and ALE is a distinguishing
factor in the advancedness of ALS in different countries. The *advancedness*
of ALS is defined in terms of the extent and distribution of participation,
particularly among adults with socially disadvantaged characteristics.

The coordination of ALS

Like other social phenomena, adult learning is subject to a variety of
coordination problems that require effective governance but this is not
to be taken for granted since
ALS are not necessarily seen as 'systems' in many countries. This is
primarily because they are deeply embedded in society and linked to a
diverse range of stakeholders and types of opportunities. They lie at the intersection of a variety of other systems including a nation's education and
training system, labour market system and other welfare state and social
policy measures. Empirically, many countries have experienced a growing
mass of adult learning opportunities over the last thirty years, but some
countries have experienced more growth than others, often in connection with the presence of coherence in the governance and coordination
among the diverse forms of adult learning, and sets of stakeholders related to each form. Nation states that feature advanced ALS have tended to
treat the phenomena as an institution and as a tool to steer economic and
social adjustment, development and the opportunity structure of citizens.
In other countries, ALS are not seen as such and continue to garner little
systematic attention or resources. The book entitled the *Political Economy
of Adult Learning Systems* provides an introduction to the political economy
of adult learning systems from this perspective, and analyses eight country case studies to draw out key differences and similarities. The book also
examines cross-national patterns associated with alternative ALS, in terms
of available comparative data on participation, and considers their link to
different patterns of outcomes as well as coordination. Patterns of coordination are considered in terms of the use of alternative social policies
as reflected by different types of public spending, the skill orientation of
economies as well as some key characteristics relating to the governance,
financing and provision structures which are distilled from the case studies.

Cross-national patterns of participation

As defined, ALS are difficult to pinpoint empirically for a variety of
reasons. Not least, the formal vs non-formal divide is of limited use since
it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which non-formal opportunities

may or may not lead to formal qualifications. As alluded to above, however, increasingly this is the case in many countries, especially those who have adapted the validation of prior learning and/or have steered provision to be more open and integrated with different forms of adult learning and thus flexible. As such, it is also increasingly difficult to identify adult learners from first time students attending regular school or college.

Despite these difficulties, comparative data made available by the Survey of Adult Skills (alternatively known as PIAAC) (see OECD 2013) is helpful and enables analyses that can capture some of the more complex nuances emerging out of ALS in different countries, but in a comparative manner. While PIAAC is primarily known as a comparative study of adult skills, it is important to emphasize that it is also a comparative study of adult learning containing data on formal and non-formal learning undertaken by adults aged 16 to 65.

Cross-national patterns of participation

Figure 1.3 provides an overview of the extent of participation across 21 countries that participated in PIAAC. As can be seen, adult education is now common in many advanced industrialised countries. The extent of participation in organized adult learning in the year prior to the survey (which corresponds to approximately the year 2012) was over 60% in the Nordic countries and over 50% in the UK, the US and Canada. At least three things stand out in terms of the patterns: the majority of organized adult learnings is undertaken for employer-related reasons, is employer-sponsored and non-formal opportunities make up a significant proportion but participation in formal education is non-trivial particularly in the countries with the highest overall activity.

Figure 1.4 shows that adult education is a growing phenomenon in all of the countries for which it is possible to ascertain. The Nordic countries had high and widely distributed levels of participation already in the 1990s so their annualized growth rate is lower but by no means trivial. The higher growth rates in many other countries implies that those countries are catching up to the Nordic countries in terms of the level of participation. Another key point that can be discerned from the data is that employer sponsored adult education is growing at a much faster rate than overall adult education in nearly all of the countries. Since employer support tends to go to workers who already have higher levels of education and other characteristics associated with social advantage, this is a growing force impacting inequality in access to adult learning opportunities. Inequality of access for disadvantaged groups is a driving feature explaining overall rates (see Desjardins, Rubenson, Milana 2006). Unless redressed with broader social policy and government support for adult learning that is targeted to socially disadvantaged adults, inequality is likely to continue to grow.

Figure 1.3 – Percent of adult aged 16-65 who participated in organized adult learning in 12-month period. [Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012]
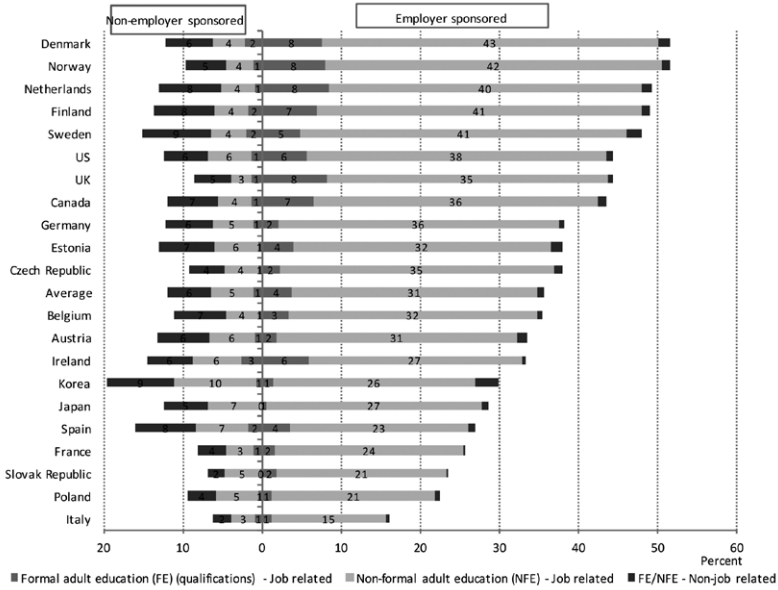

Figure 1.4 – Annualized growth rate of organized adult learning between PIAAC (2012) and IALS (1990s). [Source: own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012; International Adult Literacy Survey, 1990s]
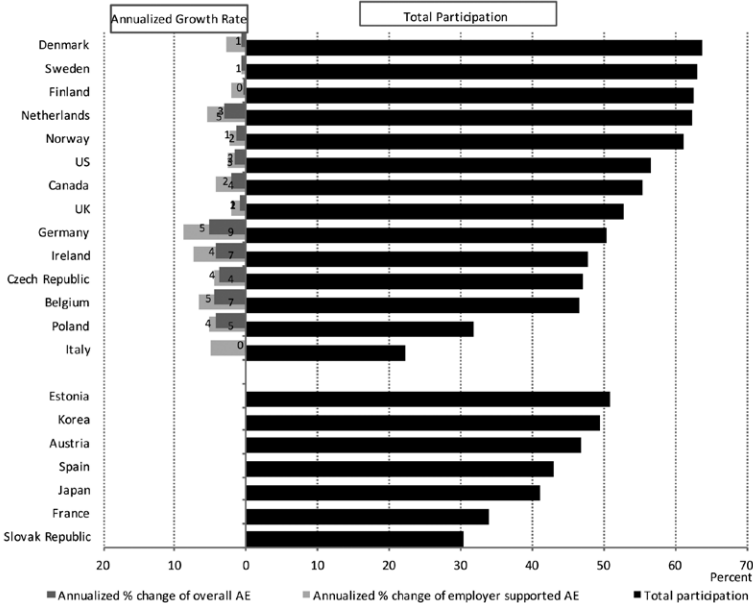
Figure 1.5 highlights that the adaptation of the entire formal and qualification system to needs of adults is a key feature explaining overall rates. It also highlights that the *openness* of higher education systems to adult students is a distinguishing factor in the *advancedness* of ALS in different countries as discussed above. It is remarkable to note that over 40% of all qualifications among the Danish adult population were attained through what can be considered the adult education system. A comparable figure for the other Nordic countries is over 30%, but it is also as high as 25% in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, the US and Canada.

Figure 1.5 – Percent of adults who attained their highest qualification beyond the normative age. [Source: own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012]
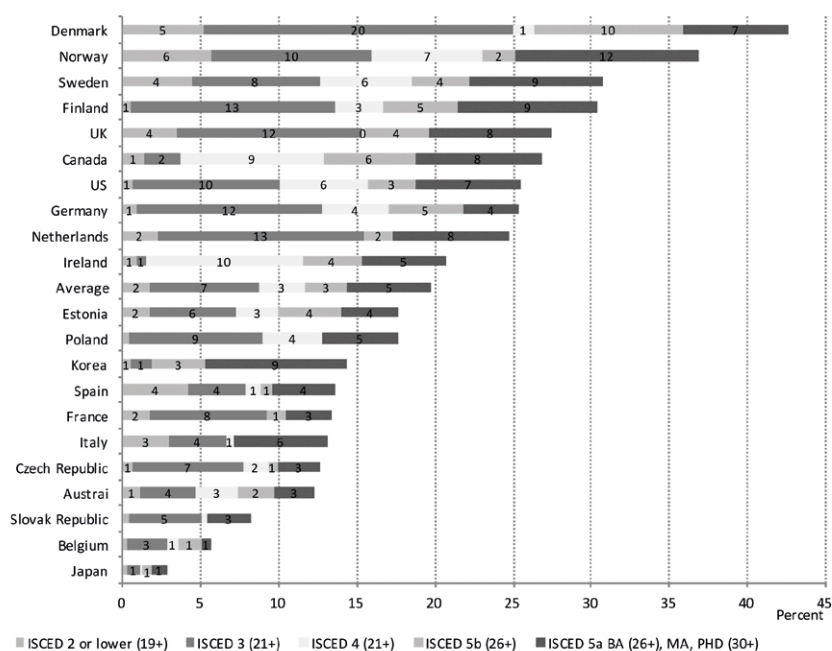
Conclusions

The participation patterns discussed above correlate strongly with the overall employment rate of the population in these countries, as well as the overall level of cognitive skills in the economy and society. As mentioned, the book *Political Economy of Adult Learning System*s examines the link between participation patterns, outcomes and approaches to coordination in more detail. For example, how structural factors relevant to social policy, institutional and public policy frameworks, the skill orientation of the economy and the coordination of adult learning systems

manifest themselves and relate to the demand for, and supply of, adult education seems to matter. The book also discusses several of the more direct policies related to governance and provision structures associated with adult education, which can be seen as strategies for coping with several of the coordination problems that are inherent to ALS. Throughout, emphasis is placed on the importance of macro tools for coordinating ALS.

Some of the results of the analysis in terms of improving the coordination of ALS are summarized here briefly. A key conclusion is that it is not just education policy that matters, but broader economic and social policies can have pervasive impacts on the extent and distribution of adult learning. These can be helpful for fostering the demand for adult learning; helping families and workers overcome situational barriers (e.g. family assistance); maintaining affordability; and simply for sustaining governance and provision structures related to ALS. Notwithstanding, education policies remain a core element of advanced ALS. A notable finding is that a healthy level of public spending on education is a necessary condition but not sufficient for ensuring well developed ALS. For example, the data reveal that some countries' public spending on education is higher but their formal systems remain relatively closed to adults and different provisions such as ABE, AVE, AHE and ALE remain poorly integrated. These are not conditions in which public spending on education translates into high and widely distributed levels of participation. Therefore, promoting the adaptation and integration of formal and non-formal provision so that they are open, flexible, customized, and linkable to qualification systems seems to be key. In connection to broader social policies, designing specific policies that target socially disadvantaged adults is also a defining feature of advanced ALS. Not least, the nature of governance matters. Fostering broad stakeholder coordination among the diverse forms of adult learning, and sets of stakeholders related to each form is a crucial feature of successful ALS. A stakeholder based approach to governing ALS appears to be superior to market forms of coordination because it allows for the sharing of information that is not so easily shared via the market mechanism, and thus helpful for mitigating failures related to information asymmetries. For example, it is helpful for identifying local and more specific individualised needs; for pooling risks associated with uncertainty surrounding investment in adult learning; for setting standards and validating all kinds of learning; for integrating all kinds of opportunities with qualification systems; and, for developing a common language to enhance coherence in the governance of ALS. However, this presumes that the institutions and actors involved in stakeholder negotiation are responsive to social forces and changing circumstances, actively seek evidence to inform the debate, and enact reforms accordingly.

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CHAPTER 2

FOUNDATIONS FOR NEW PERSPECTIVES ON
COMPARATIVE ADULT EDUCATION AND LEARNING:
APPRECIATING SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Maria Slowey

> […] sadly a feature of some of the present
> theoretical writing in comparative education
> is to ignore or to be dismissive of many of the
> earlier generation of comparativists – who did
> so much to establish the subject as a field of
> academic inquiry.
> (D. Phillips, M. Schweisfurth 2014: 2)

*1. Introduction: beyond theoretical 'fashions' in comparative adult education and
learning*

Comparative research in adult education and learning takes place
within institutions and organisations – which are themselves, of course,
shaped by wider socio-historical and cultural traditions and structures.
The field is therefore subject to the emergence and the decline over ti-
me of different theoretical approaches, methodologies, themes and policy
agendas. In an ideal world, a key aim of independent research is to con-
tribute in an incremental way – no matter how small – to the cumula-
tive development of knowledge. However, as the work of theorists such
as Bourdieu (1988) and Giroux and McLaren (1994) reveal, the ways in
which knowledge is valued are closely associated with the exercise of po-
wer: as illustrated, for example, by feminist critiques (Alcoff and Potter
1993; Barr 1999) where knowledge is portrayed as «a social process that
involves people, power and institutions» (Gumport 2002: 2).

Becher and Trowler (2001) explore these issues in a classic empirical
study *Academic Tribes and Territories*, showing how trends in research in
higher education institutions are not neutral, but are located in specific
socio-historic, cultural and institutional environments. These contexts
include, at a second order level, the exercise of academic power, gateke-
eping and the associated rise and fall of academic fashions.

Research in comparative adult education and learning is predominan-
tly conducted in universities, research institutes and international agen-
cies (governmental as well as non–governmental, as discussed further in
Chapter 4). As multi–disciplinary institutions, universities make a major
contribution to comparative research across all disciplines. While the

patterns play out differently in different countries, several decades of a dominant narrative of the 'knowledge economy' coupled with a neoliberal agenda has had a major impact on what is defined as high quality research (Altbach *et al.* 2009; Hazelkorn 2011; Scott 2015). The enormous expansion of higher education across European countries in recent decades has come at a price as universities are increasingly asked to contribute to a variety of (often competing) national (and international) policy objectives. These go beyond achieving research 'excellence' (often rather narrowly defined by the criteria used in international league tables), to an increasing emphasis on meeting labour market requirements and responding to a range of social objectives such as widening access, community engagement and responsiveness to the interests of a variety of stakeholders (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Watson 2007; Brennan *et al.* 2007; Deem *et al.* 2007; de Vries and Slowey 2012).

Furthermore, the transfer of the use of bibliometrics and citation indices from the natural sciences has had a significant impact on the social sciences – including comparative education, where such issues have increasing importance for identity, employment and career prospects of researchers (Evans and Robinson-Pant 2010). When the profit potential of knowledge is valued over knowledge for the 'public good' this can, and in many cases does, lead to the commodification of knowledge as independent, curiosity driven inquiry is marginalised (Peters 2003; Taylor, Barr and Steele 2002; Marginson 2007). Naidoo's analysis of these trends points to the establishment of norms and practices which leads universities to «find themselves in competition for increased revenues, resulting in revenue generating fields taking on greater relevance, with other less profitable areas of academic life becoming more or less second- or third-class» (2010: 79).

One of many consequences of these pressures on academic researchers – also, importantly, on students – can be to reinforce a tendency to focus on topics that are currently academically fashionable; and/or topics that are defined as being 'relevant' (for example, in relation to the societal challenges identified by the EU Horizon Research and Innovation Programme [EU 2016]). In turn, this can lead to an emphasis on recently published and more easily accessible work – such as contemporary journal articles which are more likely to be available on-line. The main focus of this book is explicitly on new perspectives and contemporary developments in comparative adult education and learning. However, sharing the view of Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014) quoted above, the argument made here is that some basic familiarity with the work of the earlier generation of comparativists is important to better appreciate the significance and potential impact of these new perspectives.

The discussion in this chapter introduces a number of key milestones in the development of comparative adult education and learning. It

does not aim to provide a history *per se* already well summarised in, for example, volumes edited by members of the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE) in 1999 (Reischmann, Bron Jr. and Jelenc) and 2008 (Reischmann and Bron Jr). Rather, the aim of this chapter is to draw attention to the ways in which contemporary concepts and approaches do not emerge from a vacuum, but – directly or indirectly – build upon a wandering pathway of stop-start, sometimes contradictory and not necessarily cumulative, traditions and bodies of knowledge.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. First, the evolution of comparative research in the field of adult education and learning is sketched. Second, the importance for comparative work of an understanding of social and historical contexts is highlighted through the example of terminological and linguistic issues. Third, three broad stages in the development of the concept of lifelong learning are outlined with the associated shift from a focus on comparative adult education to a focus on comparative adult learning. The final section draws the strands together with some speculation as to possible new areas of development.

2. Comparative research in adult education and learning: evolution of a concept

Writing a century ago, the educational philosopher John Dewey highlighted the importance of aspiring to a form of education which would lay a foundation to support learning over the individual's lifetime: «the purpose of school organisation is to insure the continuance of education by organising the powers that insure growth. The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the condition of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling» (Dewey 1916: 51).

In the aftermath of World War I, we start to see early examples of a policy focus on adult lifelong learning. For example, a report of the Ministry for Reconstruction in Britain emphasised the importance of adult education from both an individual and societal perspective.

> That the necessary condition is that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for the few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood [sic], but that adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be universal and lifelong. (Smith, 1919, introductory letter: XI: 5).

This is also a period which saw some of the early cross cultural networks and conferences emerging in the field of international adult education - for example, between British–Dutch–German relationships in adult education between 1880 and 1930 (Friedenthal-Haase *et al.* 1991) and the movement of key individuals involved in adult education between

the USA, Canada and various European countries (Reischmann, Bron Jr. and Jelenc 1999). In 1918 a new voluntary association was established: ambitiously titled the World Association of Adult Education this was largely at the instigation of Albert Mansbridge (founder of the Workers' Educational Association in Britain). The World Association received support from various adult education organisations in different parts of the world, notably the American Association of Adult Education founded in 1926 with the support of a Carnegie Grant (Bown, Okedara and Charters 1991). In 1929, the World Association of Adult Education organised its first international conference on adult education at Cambridge University. Subsequently, however, as Charters (1992: 11) observes, it 'floundered in the adverse economic climate of the 1930s'.

This pattern of the rise and fall of the impetus for international adult education reflects that of developments in the wider arena of comparative social sciences as «the surge of enthusiasm» that had been generated at the turn of the century waned in the interwar period (Hantrais 2009: 26). In the field of comparative adult education the period 1900 to the 1930s has been characterised as a 'pre-foundation' or 'bridging period', one in which there was a growing awareness of the major role which education, including adult education, might play in reflecting and shaping certain aspects of society:

> What seemed to matter most when ubiquitous feelings of uncertainty, cultural unrest, and the rise of international conflicts pressed for strategies of political realignment was a committed attempt to define the aims of national education and to utilise systematic 'cross-border' studies to direct and ratify the principles and course of educational improvements (Field, Künzel and Schemmann 2016: 113).

The post-World War II period saw a resurgence of interest and opportunity in international adult education, with UNESCO playing a central role in facilitating engagement between different parts of the world. As discussed in Chapter 1, international, development and comparative adult education can be thought of as three interconnecting, but potentially distinct spheres of activity. With a particular interest in adult education and development in 1948 UNESCO sponsored what became the first of a series of international conferences: Elsinore, Denmark (1948); Montreal, Canada (1960); Toyko, Japan (1972); and Paris, France (1983) (Charters and Hilton 1989).

Reflecting on the development of comparative adult education and learning or − as he preferred to term it − the field of «comparative studies in adult education» in the post-war period, Knoll (1999: 20) traces one active strand of work to comparative studies between East and West Germany:

In an international perspective they began to develop during the 1960s: ▪ first in an emphatic and programmatic way, ▪ then in the form of country reports, ▪ finally by improving the methodical tools in order to facilitate quantifying and problem-orientated cross-national studies.

The distinctive traditions from which adult education emerge – in terms of value base, clientele, diversity of providers, learning environments, funding sources, objectives, etc. – compared to those of school and formal education ensured lively debate about the extent to which the methodologies of comparative education (themselves derived from other disciplines) were, or were not, appropriate for comparative adult education and learning. As Knoll puts it, from the 1970s amongst those interested in comparative adult education «there were already warnings about a mere adoption of the methods used in comparative education research» (1999: 21).

Nevertheless, it is an indication of the expansion of the field over four decades that by the 1980s the 4th UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education in Paris attracted over 800 delegates. Some of these adult educators met later the same year, at a conference hosted by a new non-governmental organisation, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). One outcome from these events was the publication of the first *International Handbook on Lifelong Education for Adults* (Titmus 1989). This tends to be regarded as a significant step forward in the development of the field of comparative adult education as to that point comparative and international adult education had largely been treated as a subset within handbooks dedicated to initial, formal education.

The excitement generated by these conferences is palpable in the editor's opening comments as he reflects on how people felt they had much to learn from each other, and eagerly exchanged publications from different parts of the world. «People felt guilty about their ignorance of the work done by colleagues in other places and of the knowledge that might be derived from it» (Titmus 1989: XVII).

With 117 contributions from leading scholars from 23 different countries, almost three decades after its publication this Handbook stands as an important marker for the field of comparative adult education. While some contributions described developments at national or regional levels, most of the topics approached from a comparative perspective still retain relevance, including: theories and principles of adult education; purposes; participation; teaching and learning; providers; target groups; national progress and policies; regional and international organisations; legislation and finance; and, importantly, research.

Although wide-ranging, it has been argued that considerations of knowledge and power differentials between developing and developed

countries were not to the fore in the early stages: Lalage Bown, a British university adult educator with extensive experience of working in Africa, suggested meetings and agendas tended to be 'heavily dominated' by conceptual assumptions that were mainly derived from the interests and intellectual traditions of the richer Western states of the developed world (Bown 1983). However, the increasing engagement of developing countries led to the emergence of new strands in international and comparative adult education and thus to changing the «character and stances of international meetings to consider the nature, purposes and mission of adult education» (39). Specifically, Bown suggests there was an increasing emphasis on placing adult education in the wider context of lifelong learning, to define adult education more broadly than had been the case in many developed countries, to strengthen the connection with public policy and a concern for positive action in favour of the educationally disadvantaged.

Vibrant as these international developments in adult education may have been, as Charters and Hilton point out in *Landmarks in International Adult Education* «organizations and conferences do not guarantee a body of research and literature» (Charters and Hilton 1989: 2). The literature review undertaken by Charters and Hilton cross-referenced the terms 'adult education' and 'continuing education' with 'international' and 'comparative'. This documentary analysis yielded forty-five publications. However, further exploration indicated that: (a) some publications were not comparative (defined as comparing two or more countries); (b) some were simply statements about comparative international education (and not explicitly about adult education topics or programmes); and, (c) «the rigour of research design of several of these studies was often limited» (5–6).[1]

More academic approaches to comparative adult education research emerged under the auspices of various national, regional and international associations of comparative education, often with sub-strands or topics relevant to comparative adult education. Notable in a European context was the establishment in the 1990s of two networks with an explicit focus on international and comparative research in the field of adult education and learning: in 1991-2 the European Society for Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA) and, in 1995, an inaugural conference of the previously mentioned International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE). An analysis of the 'state of the art' of comparative studies emerging from this event highlighted three positive areas of development:

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[1] The literature search conducted by Charters, Hilton (1998) drew on material available through the optimal resource at time ERIC (Educational Resources Clearing House). It is likely therefore, if not probable, that only publications available in English were included.

(i)   The opening of a new strand of historical research on comparative adult education.
(ii) Increasing numbers of researchers, especially in Europe, engaged with comparative adult education.
(iii) Increasing resources for data collection on a comparative basis (Knoll 1999: 26).

At the same time, however, a case was also made that the underpinning theoretical formulations of the field remained rather weak. This was attributed to the fact that, as many of those interested in comparative studies were first and foremost 'adult educators' (for example, practitioners, managers and policy makers) rather than social science researchers, the «purpose of comparative studies has all too often been defined in terms of learning from each other rather than in terms of developing a body of knowledge and the formulation of social scientific theories» (Hake 1999: 216).

This tension between theory and practice is by no means unique to the field of adult education. It can be found in many professional areas (education, medicine, law, social policy and the like) where there is a strong interest from 'user' communities in the potential for research findings to be applied in the field. In the medical arena, for example, the term *translational research* refers to the translation of experimental procedures and drugs from the laboratory to the bedside ('bench to bed'), but also, especially for health services researchers and public health investigators, «translational research refers to translating research into practice; that is, ensuring that new treatments and research knowledge actually reach the patients or populations for whom they are intended and are implemented correctly» (Woolf 2008: 211).

The term 'translation' of course also carries quite a different meaning in a comparative research context, notably issues of translating from one language to another which are considered in the next section.

3. Terminological and linguistic issues

As discussed above and in Chapter 1, language and terminology reflect social and historical complexities in the construction of the field of comparative adult education and learning. Particularly noticeable has been a pronounced shift in the literature from the use of the term adult *education* to that of adult *learning*. A comprehensive analysis by Jarvis (2009) traces a difference in focus up to the 1990s between work emerging from the USA (which tended to emphasise the *individual*, with an associated stress on pedagogic matters such as the ways in which adults learn) and that emerging from the Europe (which tended to emphasise systems and institutions, hence the focus on *provision* of adult education opportunities).

The difficulties presented by such conceptual differences in the field of adult education and learning are compounded in comparative research when the analysis involves translation between different languages. The language of each country reflects, of course, diverse ideological, historical and cultural educational traditions. Translation therefore is not simply a technical issue, but requires significant levels of interpretation. Meaningful comparative work requires knowledge and understanding of the social and historical environment of the research object under comparison: for example, an investigation of some particular dimension of adult education in different countries. Meaningful translation demands conceptual clarity as it «represents a process of problem solving in which there is a great variety of possible interpretations» (Jutte 1999: 264).

While the tendency for English to become the lingua franca in most disciplines may make technical communication easier it does not solve these deeper problems; in fact, it may lead to other complications and misunderstandings as researchers communicating through English may (mistakenly) think they know what is meant in another language and *vice versa*. This leads some commentators to suggest that knowledge of the 'source language' is necessary for comparative studies as competence «in the subject cannot in this case be separated from linguistic competence» (Jutte 1999: 270).

Jutte provides several concrete examples to illustrate the contrast between translation of everyday vocabulary (which he suggests may be relatively straightforward) and translations associated with the complexities of the philosophy of adult education. Thus, in translating technical and descriptive terms of adult education such as evening class (*clase nocturna/ cours du soir*) linguistic equivalents can be found with 'the aid of dictionaries or multilingual terminological databases' (and, increasingly, automatic translation programmes and websites). In contrast, terms relating to conceptions or philosophies of adult education (for example, popular education, adult education, continuing education, civic education, community education, etc.) or forms of provision and organisation of adult education (for example, formal, non-formal adult education, nongovernmental organisations, social initiatives, work based learning, study leave, etc.) require an appreciation of historical, cultural and socio-economic underpinnings.

Despite the complexities, there are conceptual gains to be made:

> An advantage of the terminological focus in contemporary policy and practice on lifelong learning, lifelong education, and/or adult learning and education, is that they allow for a widening of attention beyond that encompassed in the historically and culturally grounded concept of 'adult education'. In many countries 'adult education' had been historically associated with liberal, enlightenment education (for example,

formazione degli adulti, Erwachsenenbildung or Voksenuddannelse). So, the introduction of new terms such as lifelong learning, livslang læring, Lebenslanges Lernen, l'apprendimento permanente opened up the field to encompass adult learning *wherever* it takes place, including: community settings, in the context of work (paid and unpaid) and employment (Jutte 1999: 268).

The potential advantage of this widening of the definitional scope can, of course, equally be interpreted as a disadvantage. Throughout the 1990s, as discussed in Chapter 1, critiques emerged of the neoliberal emphasis on the individualization' of education and training and a narrowing of focus to the economic benefits of education: from this perspective, the emphasis on the «enterprising self» where self-governance of active subjects can be viewed as an actual extension of governance into a system of self-regulation (Rose 1992; Ball 1998). These changes are well illustrated by the ways in which comparative research concerning adult education has increasingly been subsumed under the policy rubric of lifelong learning, as discussed in the next section.

4. Three generations of lifelong learning with implications for comparative research on adult education and learning

Peter Jarvis, summarising the conceptual development of adult education and its subsequent interaction with the notion of lifelong learning, points to the danger of terms losing coherence by simultaneously meaning everything and meaning nothing (2009). Analysing the changes in relation to comparative study of adults in higher education, Schuetze (2006: 302) draws attention to the changes in the interpretation of lifelong learning from the 1970s with an «idealistic and elusive social justice reform model to a more utilitarian, human capital based model a generation later». As discussed earlier, developments over this period are associated to a significant extent with the changing role of the state: from that of provider and funder «with a view to promoting more equally distributed learning opportunities» to, in the 2000s, a role of facilitator, motivator «an umpire who is setting the general rules of the game and ensuring that the various players play in accordance with them» (2006: 302).

The implications for the distinctive, and influential, Nordic model of adult education of the policy focus on lifelong learning provides an interesting illustration of these changing contexts. Rubenson (2006) outlines three 'generations' of lifelong learning as promulgated by international and intergovernmental bodies reflecting different roles for the state, market and civil society. The first generation of lifelong learning, as expressed in the UNESCO tradition, saw a strong role for civil society with NGOs playing

a relatively important part. The second generation «privileged the market, downplayed the role of the state and almost totally neglected civil society» (330) emphasising privatisation and deregulation of public education. The third generation of lifelong learning was presented as a «softened» economistic version reflecting the «Third Way» (Giddens 1998) which aimed to (re)insert into policy agendas issues such as social cohesion, civic participation and democracy. «The market still has a central role in adult learning, but the responsibilities of the individual and the state are also visible» (Rubenson 2006: 330).

Coupled with these developments has been the increasing availability and prominence of large scale data sets (highlighted in Hantrais 2009) giving increased momentum to long standing conceptual debates about comparative approaches and methodologies which largely posit correlations based on quantitative data, versus those derived from comparative research based on in–depth familiarity with the social, historical and cultural factors involved. An interesting example is provided by Rubenson's (2005) analysis of the conclusions of an OECD (2005) report reviewing adult learning policies and practices in 17 OECD countries aimed at identifying the optimum policy environment and conditions for supporting greater participation in education and training by adults with few, if any, formal qualifications. Overall recommendations highlight the role of the state in creating the structural preconditions for increasing the benefits of adult learning, promoting well–designed co–financing arrangements, improving delivery and quality control and ensuring policy coordination. Also recommended are regulatory and institutional arrangements «that are conducive to enhancing investments by firms and individuals, while limiting public financing, are key within this type of strategy» (OECD 2005: 11). But Rubenson takes issue with this last point suggesting that:

> OECD's conclusion is diametrically contrary to the policy lesson that can be drawn from the Nordic model of Lifelong Learning. A high participation and, in comparison to other countries, low inequalities in the Nordic countries can be directly linked to a state that sets a very demanding equity standard and has developed an institutional framework to support this ambition. This model explicitly recognises market failures in contributing to a system of Lifelong Learning for all (Rubenson 2005: 339).

5. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter commenced with reflections on the contemporary environment within which comparative research in the field of adult education and learning is located. While the forms will vary depending on whether researchers are working in universities, research centres, government agencies, NGOs or international bodies, in general this envi-

ronment includes three, not infrequently competing, kinds of pressures. The first is a requirement to conform to standards of productivity and 'excellence' which are derived largely from those applying in the natural sciences and the more quantitative end of the social sciences (such as economics and parts of political science). Second, researchers are increasingly asked to demonstrate the 'relevance' of their work and findings in terms of the policy priorities of the day. Third, there is an emphasis from funding agencies on the need to be responsive to the interests of a variety of stakeholders.

As Watson (2013: 14) points out, 'stakeholder' is a word which has gained prominence with a meaning almost exactly the opposite from when it was originally coined. The stakeholder «used to be the person who held the coats – and the prize-money – while the fight was on; the notion was one of scrupulous disinterest». Equally, conceptions of what constitutes 'excellence' and 'relevance' in research are also socially constructed and subject to change over time with the rise and fall of different interest groups. The brief account here of some milestones in the development of comparative adult education and learning suggests a shift from a close connection with the field of international and development adult education practice in the post-World War II period (notably, under UNESCO) to streams which are more academic and/or more quantitative and policy focused, with a concentration on finding 'what works'.

Titmus traces this divergence to the mid-1960s, when theoretical studies moved away further from the concerns of the educator in the field, and thus, following

> the example of comparative (school) education in their attempts to establish adult education as a profession, adult educators have managed to some extent to introduce it as a subject of study and teaching into universities and other institutions of higher education. In some countries, particularly in Europe, where this movement has gone furthest, but also to some extent in North America, a subject must become a science (in the German sense of *Wissenschaft*) or discipline in order to justify its inclusion in a university. It is not sufficient that adult education should be a field of activity, or comparative adult education a method of enquiry; they must establish bodies of knowledge and theory unique to themselves (Titmus 1999: 35-36).

Such tensions are common in all applied areas. The point in this chapter has not been to make the case one way or the other. It is rather that in order to gain a better understanding of contemporary developments in comparative adult education, and to develop new perspectives, some appreciation of its wider social and historical background is important as a base from which to work.

The next two chapters illustrate this position further with specific conceptual and practical examples.

Selected Readings

John Field, Klaus Künzel and Michael Schemmann (2016)
In this text extract John Field, Klaus Künzel and Michael Schemmann, University of Cologne, revisit a number of milestones in the development of comparative adult education and learning. In the contemporary era of 'comparison as an instrument of governance' coupled with a shift from adult education to adult learning, the authors raise questions as to the distinctiveness of the field in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Field J., Künzel K., Schemmann M. (2016), *International Comparative Adult Education Research: Reflections on theory, methodology and future developments*, in Schemmann M. (ed.),*Internationale Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung*, 39/*International Yearbook of Adult Education*, 39, University of Cologne, Cologne, 109-133.

The pre-foundation or 'bridging' period 1900 to 1930

[…]
Educational research in its varying forms and traditions eventually became part of a complex process of intellectual, social and institutional evolution which apart from its long-term internal effects made its data available for public governance and policy foundation. Looking at the period 1900 to 1930, then, it is clear that the instrumental value and legitimisation of comparative approaches was most obvious in educational areas closely linked to the political agendas of states and their administrative implementation.

There are no historiographic indications that this pragmatic agenda was supported let alone induced by an institutionalised type of educational science. In pointing out two seemingly opposite motives for comparative studies – preparing society for the onslaught of rising international competition and learning lessons from exactly these competing nations […]. What seemed to matter most in times when ubiquitous feelings of uncertainty, cultural unrest, and the rise of international conflicts pressed for strategies of political realignment was a committed attempt to define the aims of national education and to utilise systematic 'cross-border' studies to direct and ratify the principles and course of educational improvements.
[…]

The foundation period after World War II

[…]
The foundation period of international and comparative adult education research lasts from the end of World War II to the publication of the

Exeter Papers in 1968. Next to the Exeter Conference, which was held in 1966 in Exeter, New Hampshire, the World Conferences on Adult Education in 1949 in Elsinore and in 1960 in Montreal under the auspices of UNESCO can be considered as key events of this period.

[…]

All in all it becomes clear that the adult education movement was seen in the context of the experiences of World War II as a means of contributing to a peaceful international community.

Similarly, the second World Conference on Adult Education in Montreal in 1960 was very much preoccupied with world peace and international understanding since it took place during the Cold War. However, next to representatives of the East and the West a third group of countries became apparent. As one participant put it: «At Montreal we were able to get an impression of the influence that the Third World would soon exert» (de Maeyer 1997: 34).

[…]

The phase of institutionalisation

The phase following the publication of the Exeter Papers can be classified as the institutionalisation phase of international comparative adult education research. The phase is paralleled by a general trend of institutionalisation in adult education research in so far as several chairs for adult education research were established from the early 1970s. Especially in Germany the newly appointed chairs also focussed on comparative research questions.

[…]

The institutionalisation phase can also be characterised by the establishment of expert societies for international comparative adult education research. First of all, the International Congress of University Adult Education (ICUAE) needs to be pointed out here. Founded already in 1960, it was constituted as a worldwide network of university professors of adult education and it played an important role in carrying out the first International Conference on Comparative Adult Education in 1966. [...]Second, the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE) […]. Third, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) needs to be pointed out. Established in the early 1990s the society developed into a network of European researchers, which carry out their international and comparative research in twelve networks which meet regularly as well as in a triennial conference of the whole society (www.esrea.org).

Next to these structural and formal developments, the phase is characterised by the multitude of studies carried out and presented. Both the evidence as well as the methodological developments in this phase are remarkable.

[…]

Of course, the bridging period did not come to a sudden end; certain features of this period continued to shape the institutionalised forms of comparative adult education. Robert Peers, professor of adult education at the University of Nottingham and well known as Britain's first holder of a chair in the subject, produced a book on comparative adult education in 1958. However, as a contemporary reviewer put it, the book fell into two 'uneasily related' parts: a historical analysis of liberal adult education in Britain on the one hand, and on the other «a rather hasty comparison and analysis of the adult education patterns in other modern states» (Powell 1959: 36). Equally, the period of institutionalisation did not vanish after 1990s, though it is noticeable that some developments came to a full stop […]. However, the institutionalised forms of cooperation and publication for European comparative and international research seem to be well-established, and are likely to prove enduring features of the scholarly landscape.

Comparison as an instrument of governance

The context for adult education research changed significantly during the 1990s. As well as the discursive and substantive shift represented by the concept of lifelong learning, it is also striking that this was a period when international governmental bodies came to the fore […]. Very briefly, the origins of this process seem to have been largely European, and can be situated in the period between the completion of the single internal market in 1992 and the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996. The general adoption of lifelong learning, which now replaced the term 'lifelong education' in global policy discourse, also involved a turn towards the learner and his or her competences as the centre of attention.

Although many adult education researchers were rather critical of this turn, while others pursued it in ways that had limited potential for cross-national comparison (as in the more ethnographic variants of life narrative research), it was bound to have consequences for what is, after all, an applied discipline.

[…]

Yet, if we see the continuing development of institutionalisation at the European level, the shift towards the learner had a decisive impact on the way in which policy bodies started to collect and publish their own data on adult learning. The effects have been particularly pronounced in the field of comparative adult education, where two of the international government bodies in particular – the European Commission (EC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – designed comparative instruments for measuring adult learning that, while clearly subordinate to the collection of information about initial schooling, could then be used to help drive policy.

[…]

The collection and publication of information about adult learning as part of a wider process of using data for governance raises the question of whether such studies as PIAAC or the AES actually comprise comparative adult education research at all. Certainly they represent a very different focus and approach from the type of comparative adult education that developed during the period of institutionalisation, and which exerted influence through university teaching programmes and international conferences. Further, their explicit focus on policy means that the published reports lack any explicit conceptual or methodological discussion, and rarely place the concerns of adult education scholars at their core. The focus on outcomes and participation produces an imbalance, where adult education systems of provision are evaluated only in terms of a narrow and partial definition of their results. However, simply to reject the OECD and EC studies as irrelevant to comparative adult education would be excessive, partly because the underpinning conceptualisation and method are more interesting than may appear from the published reports; and partly because they set out to collect information that can be of value in a comparative perspective.

[…]

This exercise has caused us to pose a very simple, and rather disturbing question: is this chapter of comparative adult education research now closing?

There are several reasons for posing the question in this provocative way. The main unit of analysis in comparative research has been populations that gather under a particular political territory, whether the nation or a sub-national area. The value of these units is now open to question, with the diminishing importance of the nation state as a category of analytical differentiation as compared with the growing significance of supra-national agents (from intergovernmental organisations through cultural institutions to corporations). Ulrich Beck's critique of 'methodological nationalism' does not assume that national regimes have lost all relevance; but rather that in 'second modernity' they are diminishing in significance in the face of supra-national forces (corporations, climate change, terrorism) (Beck 1997). Yet traditionally comparative adult education research has been founded on the nation state as its main unit of analysis.

In addition, the turn to the learner in the policy domain has been accompanied in our field by the widespread adoption of in-depth studies of learner identities, often drawing on individual life narratives as the main source of evidence. The keywords in such research are then individual experience, subjectivity, and difference. The dominance of qualitative approaches focussed on individual learners, and emphasising the variety of ways in which people make use of learning in their lives, does not

lend itself to meaningful comparison between entire populations. Also, in a number of countries the curriculum in the education of adult education professionals has shifted towards a competency base, limiting the scope for the study of comparative adult education.

Barbara Merrill and Agnieszka Bron (2008)
Comparative research in the field of adult education and learning is increasingly undertaken in international teams which not only comprise members from different countries but also, frequently, from different disciplines and methodological approaches. The potential benefits to be gained from this approach are undoubtedly significant – in terms, for example, of scale, conceptual development, quality and volume of comparative empirical data. In order to optimise the likelihood of successful outcomes Barbara Merrill, Reader at the University of Warwick, and Agnieszka Bron, Professor at Stockholm University, reflect on important lessons to be learned from previous experiences.

Merrill B., Bron A. (2008), *Lessons learned from EU-projects. Experiences from European projects: generality versus particularity*, in Reischmann J., Bron Jr. M. (eds.), *Comparative Adult Education 2008: Experiences and Examples*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 83-90.

This paper addresses the issues and the lessons of working transnationally on European research projects and draws on our experiences over the past years of working together on several different projects […]. Engaging in such research is both interesting and challenging and also occasionally problematic – it is at times pleasurable but also at times painful.
[…]
The journey of working together in European research teams has been a learning experience. In our first project together – a TSER [Targeted Socio-Economic Research] project involving six countries – we naively assumed that because of geographical closeness and the growing impact of globalisation on cultures we would be on the same wavelength in terms of defining and understanding key concepts and intellectual traditions. One thing we did learn early on is that good communication, patience and understanding is essential in order to achieve successful outcomes. Over the years and involvement in several projects we have built up a good working relationship with each other as the core has remained the same with more recently a team from Portugal and Poland joining us. Within the educational and social sciences there is a plethora of cross-national research, past and present, yet there is a lack of literature which looks at the processes of working in this way. There is also a lack of literature on comparative adult education within Europe.
[…]

There can be at least four approaches to using comparative research method in research projects:

1. A common phenomenon is a series of studies, e.g. educational systems or training of adult educators in each country; and afterwards a comparison is made. While a methodology differs and comparison is often not possible, a presentation in an anthology nevertheless gives an opportunity to a reader to look for differences and similarities. Such projects existed before EU-research was started.

2. A whole team decides beforehand to study a common phenomenon and discuss methodology to be able from the beginning to look at the differences and similarities. There are however often shortcomings in decision making about a common methodology for reasons stated in this article.

3. The coordinator takes the lead and decides a common methodology while the partners follow the plan. It can however involve a risk as to whether or not partners are really following the common methodology and whether they agree with the methodology.

4. One single researcher examines two or more countries and studies a given topic. Such projects probably have the best chance of being called comparative.

[…]

As an example we want to present the project from the third group in which one of us was involved, but the results however were not exactly positive […]. The project was focused on introducing the EC idea of learning centres across Europe, which was launched in Lisbon […]. The task was to study the best practices of learning centres across Europe in 32 countries. Several scholars around Europe were contacted and asked to be experts and help in the one-year project to study learning centres in two to five countries each. One of us became responsible for five Nordic countries: i.e. Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland.

The experience of being in the project was not very rewarding. First of all we were not treated as experts at all, and our role was reduced to conducting research as the lead team decided upon the research strategy. Thus, we were not asked to contribute to the design of the project, even if our knowledge about the countries in terms of culture, language, policies and reality was more knowledgeable than the lead team. This was the reason why we were chosen to be experts and run the research. Instead our role was reduced to that of research assistants. Suddenly the project was shortened to seven months instead of twelve, and we were asked to speed up the research period. The questionnaire we were supposed to use did not match the specificity of the culture of each country. It was written in English and from the perspective of the Netherlands. There was an enormous language problem, as the Slovenians could not possibly translate the English into Polish, and the Poles did not under-

stand English. Similar problems in lack of understanding existed within the Nordic countries. Even if Swedes are known as having a good command of English they still faced difficulties. We had to use the so called Nordic language to communicate with Danes, Norwegians and Icelandics. This was however not possible with Finns. That is why we had to look for Swedish speaking Finns and Swedish learning centres in Finland.

[…]

Altogether the comparison became superficial, not only because of the data collected but also because of the theoretical model researchers used, which pre-conceptualised their selection of learning centres and their analysis, no matter what the research experts advised the leading group upon. However, the final results were appreciated by the Commission. The research was commissioned together with results which were already known in advance but only confirmed by the team. The team is still working for the Research Institute which generates commissioned projects from the EC.

[…]

The biggest obstacle in these kinds of projects is the lack of knowledge with regards to comparative methodology. We also lack handbooks on comparative methodology. Such are necessary if we want to introduce newcomers to the field. Another obstacle is the fact that […] projects are poorly funded yet the EU expects a lot of work and outputs despite the low budget. When undertaking quantitative research we can face problems because of cultural differences. It is sometimes difficult to have a common set of questions for all partners, e.g. to do with class, ethnicity, educational and professional qualifications.

European intellectual traditions

Historically there is a diversity of intellectual traditions across Europe such as feminism, symbolic interactionism, critical theory, social constructivism, hermeneutics etc., even if rationalism and empiricism unites European researchers. While this diversity can enrich adult educational research it can also lead to profound differences around key issues and methodological approaches. In the TSER project, for example, our French speaking Belgian partners were influenced by French sociologists while the German team came with a strong theoretical and scientific sociological background from a very traditional German university. UK social science researchers have the reputation within Europe of being empiricists and we were viewed in this light. In contrast the intellectual climate of Spain in the post-Franco era is an optimistic one and the Spanish team adhered to critical theory and theories of transformation such as Freire and Habermas – which the UK team had sympathy with. The Swedish team on the other hand brought some

thoughts that were adopted from the American pragmatism, in particular, symbolic interactionism.

Theoretical differences also manifested themselves in different methodological approaches. All of our projects have involved the use of biographical interviews (as well as the survey method) and the different intellectual and epistemological traditions of the teams raised issues about how to interview and analyse the data.

[…]

Thus, there are not only epistemological differences among the team members but also ontological. Moreover, some of the partners have less experience of empirical work than others. Some are more sensitive to the issues of cultural and academic differences, while others want to impose their way of doing research and theorising. This can be problematic in many different ways contributing to tensions and misunderstanding affecting the work of the project, and also the comparative aspect. There are strengths and weaknesses within the team members which can both contribute to the project, but also hamper it.

Geographically in our current [project] we are from the north, south and east of Europe although the northern universities dominated. This is an important and sensitive issue as academics in southern Europe feel that research, theory and knowledge developed in southern universities are less valued and often ignored by those in the north. It is essential to bear in mind that working cross-nationally can help us to stand outside of our national paradigms as we are introduced to new ideas and approaches but at the same time we may also struggle to understand each other.

The language question

It is important in European research to build conversations as the language issue can sometimes be difficult and conversations can get 'lost in translation'. Postmodernists remind us that language is a crucial part of our identity as it shapes the way we view others and understand the world. Good communication and understanding is essential in the underpinning of any cross-national research. Failure to achieve this may result in soured relationships, irritation and poor research. Language, if you are not careful, can become an obstacle to the smooth running of a European project.

[…]

English has become the language of academic research and this can cause frustration in communication and also resentment. Native English speakers need to be aware that it is a strain, tiring and a difficulty for some for whom English is not their first language to speak and write at an academic level. To ease the stress our practice is to take breaks when needed to enable partners to speak in their own language. It is

also interesting to note that a European English language has emerged whereby non-English speakers speaking in English can understand each other while native English speakers have difficulty in understanding their English. However, it is important for English researchers to realise that working in a second language can be frustrating because it may be difficult to convey exactly what you want to say. Each language has its own nuances and cultural assumptions on meanings of words and concepts.

Language means not only words, sentences, grammar and pronunciations, but also a culture. There are different academic languages that are related to micro culture of a given discipline. We cannot talk about one discipline – adult education, but several depending of the language, culture and academic tradition. Even this can contribute to misunderstanding. Thus, our task as researchers is to try to understand the other and in this case other researchers' academic culture and language.

The cultural divide and conceptual confusion

Clarifying the definitional and interpretational meanings of key concepts to be used in a research project is an essential step in any European research project. Issues and concepts which each country takes for granted within their own society can suddenly become problematic. For us key concepts such as adult student, higher education and access, for example, can be problematic as they are interpreted differently. In Belgium, Sweden and to a lesser extent Germany the word adult student in relation to higher education does not exist as many people leave entering university until their twenties. In the UK there is a national recognised age for an adult student at undergraduate level: 21 years and over, while in Sweden the age of a mature student is 25+.

[…]

In the UK class and ethnicity are very important in the impact they have on adult education but they are less important in other countries. Although we all belong to a common Europe through the EU cultural differences remain. In Sweden for example it is considered inappropriate to ask about the ethnicity of a student, and there are no records kept about the student's origin. Similarly it is not possible to get data about the class background of mature students; the only data that is available about students' class background is up to 35 year of age.

In this article we have stressed some lessons learned through our engagement in European projects. While arguing for a comparative approach we have stated that EU projects seldom are comparative, and that there are many obstacles to make them as such. The biggest are the lack of skills in comparative methodology, the problem of common understanding of concepts, the difference in academic culture, and the time and funds constrains. However, comparative methodology is important and that is why we

advocate for better training of researchers in adult education, and for more literature and handbooks of comparative research. Importantly comparative European research on adult education helps us to step outside of our own cultures and learn from other countries different ways of improving policy and practice and thus enhancing the learning experience of adults.

KATARINA POPOVIĆ (2014)
This text extract from a chapter by Katarina Popović, Professor of Adult Education, University of Belgrade, and Secretary General of the International Council of Adult Education, illustrates the use of discourse analysis as a method to examine various EU statements and strategies on lifelong learning, posing critical questions concerning a narrowing of focus to 'skills'.

Popović K. (2014), *The Skills: A Chimera of Modern European Adult Education*, in Zafaris G.K., Gravani M.N. (eds.) (2014), *Challenging the 'European Area of Lifelong Learning': A Critical Response*, Springer, Dondrecht, 17-29.

Introduction

The concepts of *recurrent education*, *continuing education* and *permanent education* (introduced by the Council of Europe) began to appear in discussions from the 1960s both in Europe and UNESCO. The *learning to be* approach of Edgar Faure and the International Commission on the Development of Education influenced the European understanding of adult education from the 1970s. This approach agreed with the type of humanism that UNESCO's policy was rooted in (having a person, its needs, well-being and self-fulfilment at the core of its philosophy) but also in line with the democratic vision of European society with equal opportunities, active participation and autonomy of citizens and learners. Together with *lifelong education*, *learning to be* influenced policy, legislation and practice of adult education in many European countries, although OECD's *recurrent education* seemed to respond to the need for a more flexible relationship between education, training and work and thus to the needs of fast technological development. Even the CoE's recommendations from 1970 pointed out the need for permanent education to meet the contemporary demands of both social justice and economic progress […].
[…]
Lifelong learning emerged as a conceptual framework able to balance these approaches and was renewed as a concept with the *European Year of Lifelong Learning* in 1996 and the *White Paper on Teaching and Learning: Towards a Europe of Knowledge* in 1997, promising answers to the challenges of the coming millennium. Lifelong learning policy in Europe, as the dominant discourse which gained currency in the 1980s and 1990s after

the other concepts had been slowly abandoned, seemed to be the only approach including the 'old', somewhat naive humanism (believing in changing the world through education) and the socio-economic needs of the modern times. The increased speed of science, technology, economy and politics created new demands, and in 2000 Europe experienced a paradigm shift in many areas, including education.

Memorandum on lifelong learning: message and language

In 2000 it was obvious that Europe was influenced by global trends and reacted quickly by changing its approach to education and learning […]. These changes, new demands and new political and economic challenges shaped the lifelong learning and adult education policy. This was further expressed in the Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning 1* in 2000, a document that counts as one of the milestones of the development of European educational policy, and the *Communication from the Commission: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* in 2001.

The main goal, ambition and tone of these texts expressed the conception in which education was encompassing multiple purposes and dimensions. The rhetoric of the *Memorandum* and the *Communication* was (and probably still is) an enticing one; employability and social inclusion going hand in hand, the availability of lifelong learning to everyone, the promotion of active citizenship and the promotion of vocational skills and self-development; they were all supposed to pave the way to a knowledge-based society, allowing full participation in social and economic life for everyone.

The achievements of the *Memorandum* are undeniable, and a significant step has been taken towards Europe as a common educational area. A number of aspects have also been improved – the quality of adult teaching and education has increased, professionalisation is progressing, there is a constant growth in research volume, and mobility of learners and staff in adult education is higher than ever. Still, some concepts, approaches and ideas are questionable and need to be analysed, because they are persistent and represent the basis of the new European educational policy in spite of obvious failures in many aspects, such as widening access to education, increasing level of participation and so on. *Skills* and *basic skills* are such concepts, even being transferred to the new main policy documents of the European Commission.

[…]

Agenda

[…]

What does the language of the *Memorandum* reveal, and why is the language important? We use it here as the main criterion for our research

approach: discourse analysis (combined with the interpretive approach), known as *critical language study* because of its power to decode the paradigms behind language. The starting premise is that the use of language is defined by the sociocultural norms or meta-level factors and frames which regulate talk and through which meaning-making occurs, and, coming closer to the user, his language is constructed by the policy discourse and educational paradigm. Even decoding some formal aspects of language and relating them to the context may reveal much about the discourse behind it […] thus, the critical language analysis opens a base for the interpretation of planning elements and possible actions based on conceptual premises in the text of document.

So, the language of *Memorandum* shows, at a first glance, the deep commitment to lifelong learning. The term appears more than 130 times in the document, *nonformal* and *informal learning* are mentioned around 10 times, *citizens* and *civil society* many times, *competitiveness* just 7 times, *employability* 10 times; similar quotes apply to the term *communication*. Obviously, this discourse does not deserve to be called 'neo-liberal' – it is not, at least not in its intention. But the devil is in the detail, and the messages reveal a kind of naivety suggesting steps and solutions that do not respond to the real nature of the proclaimed goals and do not give a realistic direction of reaching them. The most important 'detail' – even more, one of the pillars of the whole document – is 'skills' and 'basic skills', being explicitly mentioned 27 times in the first message and at least once in all other messages. But even more important is the conceptual and relational analysis of these concepts. Moreover, the relevance, consistency and coherence of the ideas around basic skills will be used as the criteria for a discourse and interpretive analysis.

[…]

Difficulties around the concept of 'skills'

[…]

It is seldom that a concept makes such a successful carrier and has such impact at both international level and among the EU members as *skills* did [...]. Widely accepted, hardly ever critically reflected, further developed in many aspects (basic skills, key skills, generic skills, high and low skills), skills have a fascinating attractiveness for all those seeking a closer relation between education and work, for more effectiveness and standardisation, for establishing procedures, quality criteria and measuring. This kind of popularity made 'skills' a kind of *deus ex machina* for any problem, be it in the field of policy, research or practice.

Indeed, the introduction of this approach helped European education to progress, raised many new issues and supported many developments

in the field of vocational education and training. It inspired new critical discussion about traditional, old-fashioned and outdated approaches to learning and education, which really could not meet the demands of the new, modern times. But coming back to the question; does this approach have unlimited relevance and functionality for the European agenda?

[…]

A serious attempt to overcome the difficulties of a skills approach is made by the use of the term *competences*. Many authors use these words as synonyms, thus giving an *alibi* to the shortcomings of skills, ascribing some qualities of the *competencie*s to the *skills*, which are not in the nature of skills. The competences indicate the tendency to combine skills (including cognitive, social and personal), particularly those not related to employment and employability and not exclusively outcome oriented. The concept of *key competences* suggests this even more, trying to include *attitudes* and elements of *values* in it […]. The concept of competences also gains popularity and developed further, *generic, broad, intersectoral, transversal,* creates an artificial, anthropologically strange idea of the person, who consists of a set of implausible competencies, but with no recognisable characteristics of a human being, whose performances – even in a strictly professional setting – are also determined by emotions, motivation, satisfaction and very much by a value system.

Developments after the Memorandum and Communication

Both documents could be seen as milestones in European educational policy. They adopt a balanced approach, a broad and all-encompassing understanding of teaching and learning and an openness to the new tendencies in education and related areas. This contains some elements of the best traditions of European education. The set of messages in the documents was given favourably and with commitment. On the other hand, these texts heralded a new development in this field, which was becoming the dominant paradigm in European educational policy. It was the concept of skills in these documents that announced the positivist, pragmatist discourse and the prevalence of the labour-/job-oriented function of education and learning.

[…]

The fact that two strategic documents *Europe 2020* and *ET 2020* are accompanied by an *Agenda* which has just the word *skills* in the title, leaving out other terms related to education and learning (without having some new *Action Plan on Adult Learning*), sheds light on the central concept and main paradigm of these strategies and dominant approach. Lifelong learning is obviously not recognised as a concept helpful for achieving the European goals for 2020, but *education and training* together with *skills* are recognised as useful. *ET 2020* does recognise lifelong learning as a

fundamental principle, including adult learning, but in the *Agenda New Skills for New Jobs,* they are hardly mentioned. If adults have such a low rank as a target group in all these documents, then *lifelong learning* as the overall title for the policy and programme is not justified. Adults *disappear* to a certain extent from the scene, learning also – what remains dominantly is education, training, formal system and young people as the prevailing target group […]

[…]

The risk of such a narrow development focusing on skills is twofold. The strength of European education and learning policies could hardly lie in a concept which is not rooted in the European tradition, not consequently integrated into the whole policy (economic, social, educational) and not related to the achievement of overall goals, especially not in the long run. One of the strong points of the European tradition – close connections between general and vocational education and good general education *for all* – is jeopardised now […]. The artificial division between general and vocational education does not withstand interrogation – neither from a formal-logical nor a functional point of view. The attempt to incorporate them under the umbrella of *skills*, as *vocational and soft skills*, *basic and high*, *generic and scientific* is artificial and mainly disadvantageous for the second group. The relationships between them has to be redefined, and some new paradigms (not just mechanisms) for their functional connections should be found, which is far more challenging (and more difficult) for educational policy than the provision of basic or similar skills. It is perhaps easier to create a common approach to problems like 'skills shortage assessment' than to address the question Europe once shared with UNESCO – 'How to live together?' But it does not make this question less important.

Furthermore, there is a danger in the process of translating the European policy at the national level. Considering the variety of approaches, traditions and learning cultures, training could be easily understood as drill, and skills acquisition implemented simply as short-term courses on elementary skills. Very strong orientation to employment would certainly lead to the reduction of funding for any other kind of education (such as civic education, intercultural and peace education), which is embedded in the fundaments of European history and community and is an inseparable part of its identity. Oriented to short-term goals, European societies will not have long-term and common solutions for challenges like ageing societies, mobile workforce, mixed societies, growing nationalism and aggression, fragile democracies and so forth.

KEIKO YASUKAWA, MARY HAMILTON AND JEFF EVANS (2016)
This reading illustrates the development of methodologies in comparative research in the field of adult education and learning to in-

vestigate the potential impact on policy and public opinion of the outcomes of major survey data. In this example a team with expertise in comparative research on adult literacy- Professors Keiko Yasukawa, University of Technology Sydney, Mary Hamilton, Lancaster University and Jeff Evans, Middlesex University- provide a content analysis of the ways in which the results from the PIAAC survey were reported across three countries, in three different languages (English, French and Japanese).

Yasukawa K., Hamilton M. and Evans J. (2016), *A comparative analysis of national media responses to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills: policy making from the global to the local?*, «Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education», DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2016.1158644.

In this paper, we examine how findings from PIAAC – particularly the themes highlighted by the OECD in the relevant Country Notes – have entered into media discourse in participating countries. From the standpoint of sustainable policy and practice in adult and lifelong learning, the extent of national media's coverage of the PIAAC and their level of critical engagement with the OECD's analysis of the findings is of interest. […] We take a socio-material approach to the policy process that focuses on the travelling artefacts of the international assessments – the test items themselves, the numbers and data displays, and scientific, media and policy reports produced in relation to them – and the social relations and processes through which the tests are materialised within national contexts […]
    […]
The corpus of data we draw on was collected between October and December 2013 by inviting members of our professional networks to alert us to relevant media reports; this was supplemented by searches of online international newspaper databases (such as Nexis and Factiva) and the websites of key newspapers in each country. There are substantial challenges for media analysis in an age of networked, multi-lingual and multi-modal digital media where data sources occur in a variety of interconnected forms accessed by different audiences. These setups produce trails of interconnected texts and artefacts including blogs, tweets, online reports and readers' comments, photographs, videos and data charts. After our initial analysis, we needed to select a manageable and comparable sample of sources from these trails. Thus, in this paper, we focus on the coverage of the survey in a selection of key national daily newspapers in each country in the period immediately following publication of the results on 8 October 2013.
The selected articles in the French and Japanese press were read and analysed in their original languages, with headlines and quotations tran-

slated as necessary. We encountered numerous difficulties with the basic terminology of key words and concepts.

The pattern of media coverage was similar in all three countries. The main articles appeared during the first two or three days after the results were released, and were then quickly eclipsed by other news. The key issues identified by the OECD's Country Note for each of the three countries appear to have strongly guided the focus of the media reports in the respective countries. For example the media reports for all three countries followed the Country Notes in identifying the country's position in the international league tables as the main headline news. The generational variations, whether deemed positive or negative, were another common area of attention. However, some of the OECD-identified key issues struggled to get taken up by the local press […].

The headline findings were repeated briefly in later articles, where they were mentioned in relation to other surveys (particularly PISA) and used as evidence in debates about social and education issues. In the UK, all the print newspapers were connected to online news sites that included further links to commentary and data, and extensive reader comments on these sites brought an interactive dimension to the coverage. The level of reader commentary in the Japanese and French media was harder to determine due to our more limited access to such sources through the news database and the newspapers' online sites.

In each of the countries there were issues of language and terminology, which were especially complicated where we needed to translate the original coverage from French or Japanese into English. In addition, some key terms, including literacy and numeracy, used by the OECD were not easy for the journalists to translate into everyday French and Japanese. As mentioned above, French papers wrote about 'the written (domaine)' (l'écrit) or 'reading' (la lecture) and 'calculation', 'figures' or 'maths'.

In the Japanese press, literacy was translated both as 'reading comprehension ability' (読解力) and as 'academic ability' (学力), while numeracy was expressed as 'numerical thinking/cognitive ability' (数的思考力). Furthermore, PSTRE [assessment of 'problem-solving in technology rich environments'] was rarely translated in full, and the Japanese media used the terms IT skills or PC skills for what we assume to be references to PSTRE. These issues of language and terminology constrained our ability to evaluate our effectiveness in capturing (via searches) the full corpus of relevant media reports, and introduced uncertainties in evaluating the media's inter- pretation of the findings.

[…]

Both numeracy and literacy were mentioned in the UK, with numeracy continuing to enjoy equal status with literacy (rather than the earlier status as the 'poor cousin' of literacy) achieved under the Skills for

Life policy […]. 'Literacy' appears to be interpreted by the UK media in a traditional way as printed language, mainly books, while the digital forms and skills are ignored. This is despite the fact that the UK sample achieved a slightly higher proportion of top scorers (Levels 2 and 3) in PSTRE than the international average, and younger age groups did better than their elders. So there is an interesting, but complex, story to be told about the PSTRE findings that is not reflected in the early media reports.

Japan's ranking as the top scorer in L and N was analysed more carefully in one report, for example, pointing to the difference between the overall average (where Japan came top in both) and the percent- age of the participants who were performing at level 5 in Literacy and Numeracy (where Japan came fifth and seventh, respectively). But they did not discuss what these results tell us about what people at these different levels should be able to do with their literacy and numeracy in different contexts […]

Despite their different placements in the PIAAC league table, the media coverage focused on negative findings in all three countries and this was carried through metaphorical language in the headlines and main body of the articles. Even the Japanese media, despite the country's high ranking in L and N, reported on the 'problem' of digital skills. This genre of 'blame' works across the political spectrum, suggesting that PIAAC can be fitted into existing debates and policy agendas: it has 'something for everybody'.

Media in all three countries, though not all papers within each, paid some attention to differences in performance according to other demographic factors. At least two French papers noted that people born in and out of France performed differently, while one of the Japanese papers cited opinion that the low degree of disparity between the lowest scores and the highest scores was due to the low levels of immigration in Japan. In the UK, no attention was paid to migrant groups, even though there were differences that could have been reported. However, the proportion of those scoring at the lowest levels in the UK is compared with the proportion of high achievers and linked with other background variables to make an argument about socio–economic inequalities within the country, as compared with other nations. In Japan, where the disparities according to educational qualifications and occupational factors were the smallest across the OECD countries, the media reported these as evidence of the success of the country's education system.

Gender differences were not mentioned in the English or French press, despite there being important gender differences in Numeracy scores. As discussed above, the gender issues in Japan were not initially taken up there as a major focus, despite the OECD's efforts to highlight the under-utilisation of women's high-level skills in the Country Note.

[…]

Despite an apparent interest in trends over time, none of the media in any country compared the PIAAC performance to the earlier IALS, even though the UK and France were participants in it. Comparisons or references to other international surveys, where made, are to PISA, which tends to be better known and understood by the media. In the UK, this omission is very significant since a story of improvement in literacy from these earlier assessments could have been told, rather than the prevalent narrative of panic and decline […].

The French press drew out most explicit policy implications for adult learning, training and LLL policies. In contrast, the UK and Japanese press made few policy connections other than with schools. Perhaps this was because in the UK and Japan the younger generation performed no better than the older generation. This lack of generational difference – compared with the higher scores for the younger groups in most other countries – was taken to show a declining trend in young people's performance, which was attributed to various causes within the education system, depending on the political leaning of the newspaper source (e.g. ineffective reforms of the curriculum, 'dumbing down' of qualifications, etc.) or to cultural or disciplinary issues among young people themselves. The poorer performance in PSTRE, together with the low uptake of the computer-based form of the survey, raised questions for the Japanese about reasons behind this, and the government's identification of this performance as an issue, as well as the need for re-examination of their IT education and integration of information and communications technology into schools, was reported.

[…]

Media analysis is complex in an age of interconnected interactive digital media. To make the analysis manageable, we strictly constrained the sources included, and excluded online news sites and readers' comments. Comparison proved difficult due to the differences of media industries across countries and translation problems with key concepts. For these reasons, our study was more challenging than expected.

However, comparative studies such as this are important because they highlight the difficulties faced by international surveys themselves in working to influence policy across diverse contexts and languages. The analysis shows how, in each national case, particular aspects of the PIAAC results were foregrounded, depending not only on the performance measures themselves, but also on how accounts of the results were assembled to extend national cultural narratives and debates around education and social policy. The PIAAC acts as a policy intervention initially through framing public awareness of adult skills and persuasively enrolling key national actors. The OECD itself actively mobilises media responses and offers copious (yet selective) resources to guide public interpretation of the findings, via Country Notes and press releases

simultaneous with the results, combined with an accessible interactive website and ongoing background briefings on economic and educational issues. This serves to frame and shape media coverage in national contexts, and provides a credible evidence base that is hardly contested in the ensuing media discourse, at least in the short term. Importantly, the OECD material summarises complex data that are otherwise not easy for journalists to quickly access and absorb. It inevitably directs attention to particular facts and issues in a format that is easy to translate into press reports and headline news.

The national media report the results with varying degrees of alarm, celebration or complacency […] but all countries treat them as significant headline-worthy news and articulate them within existing national preoccupations. Consequently, the OECD's agenda is not uniformly reflected in the media coverage. Some key points are ignored or re-interpreted in the context of ongoing national assumptions, definitions and debates, and others are selectively appropriated to mount new arguments within existing local debates. In particular, the national media diverged from the OECD's agendas in their treatment of LLL policies (in Japan and the UK at least), digital aspects of skills and some demographic differences and inequalities, such as those relating to gender, migrant populations and class. The PIAAC is explicitly intended to inform national LLL policies, but LLL and adult education appear to be less easy for journalists to grasp and discuss compared to initial schooling, which is never far away from public debate. Thus, the role of the newspaper media was largely that of framing, filtering and simplifying the OECD's reports of the findings in line with existing cultural narratives. These simplified messages are then amplified and incorporated within popular public discourse through repetition in related stories over time.

[…]

The media are often accused of biased and superficial coverage of key policy issues. However, our close investigation revealed more about the dynamics of news production in relation to a specialist news object like an international adult skills survey. We conclude that the media's role in translating PIAAC's global agenda into local policy action is understandably limited due to industry demands to rapidly produce newsworthy material from the available information; and indeterminate depending on national contextual factors, which help constitute what will be recognised by their readership as an interesting story

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CHAPTER 3

WHAT TO COMPARE?
COMPARATIVE ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Regina Egetenmeyer

1. Introduction

As discussed in previous chapters, comparative research in adult education has long been characterised by its fragmentary results and rather limited output (Reischmann and Bron Jr 2008). It is still frequently conducted in small research projects by single researchers. At the same time, there are several interdisciplinary research projects currently in development that focus on issues related to adult education. Such research is frequently driven by international (political) organisations such as the EU, UNESCO or the OECD and linked to the availability of international datasets (e.g. AES, CVTS, PIAAC) (Egetenmeyer 2014, 2015). This chapter concentrates on adult education in a broad sense, focusing on issues and contexts that support adult learning. In many cases, the reasons for and goals of adult learning cannot be categorised as either only for professional goals or only for personal/social goals. This is why research in this field cannot easily be divided into the separate fields of research on general adult education and research on professional continuing education.

According to this understanding of comparative adult education, the field of practice to be researched differs broadly from initial formal school education (hereinafter referred to as school education). Contexts, providers, organisations, reasons, goals, learners in adult education – to name just a few – differ substantially from school education. This is why comparative research in adult education raises some fundamental questions: What are the specific features of comparative adult education as opposed to comparative school education? What are the central clusters of research issues in comparative adult education? What are the (inter)disciplinary relations of comparative adult education to other (comparative) research fields in education and beyond?

Comparative education can be defined as:

an interdisciplinary subfield of education studies that systematically examines the similarities and differences between educational systems in two or more national or cultural contexts, and their interactions with

intra- and extra-educational environments. Its specific object is educational systems examined from a cross-cultural (or cross-national, cross-regional) perspective through the systematic use of the comparative method, for the advancement of theoretical understanding and theory building (Manson 2011: 215).

In her analysis of comparative education, Manson calls it a field with specific methods and objectives. Comparative adult education, however, is far from reaching that stage and the linkage to comparative school education is weak, consisting mainly in borrowing methodological aspects from the latter for the further development of comparative adult education.

As discussed in Chapter 1, comparative research in adult education frequently draws on a classic definition by Charters and Hilton (1989: 3) which emphasises that comparative research is not merely placing 'side by side, of data, but involves an attempt to understand why differences and similarities occur and what their significance might be. With regard to the methodological discourse in comparative education, a country perspective, based on the idea of the nation state, should be changed to a context perspective, as globalisation has created new «educational spaces which belong exclusively to neither nations nor systems» (Green 2003: 93). While a system perspective may be highly relevant for the comparative analysis of formal, school-based education, it may be far less appropriate for adult education, which is characterised by a highly diverse range of providers, levels and modes of learning. This means that the influence of countries, nations or states on adult education is weaker than on school education, as the links of adult education to its state context are much smaller. Taking countries as the basis for comparison in adult education may therefore not lead to an adequate basis for the interpretation of similarities and differences. Moreover, transnational developments – as mentioned below – may be helpful in the interpretation of similarities and differences. This is why this chapter argues for the need for designing adequate contexts for comparison in adult education. Comparative research in adult education will then compare phenomena in adult education in different contexts and will research the influence of these contexts on the phenomena in question.

It is advisable therefore to focus on *issues* in adult education, which can be compared between different contexts. Following this approach, comparative adult education can be understood as a specific perspective in adult education research (rather than a method or a research field in its own right), one that stresses interrelations and contexts of comparison:

The comparative study of education is not a discipline: it is a context. It allows for the interaction of perspectives arising out of a number of social science disciplines and from a wide range of national backgrounds.

It allows for a greater understanding or the interrelationship of educational variables through the analysis of similar and different educational outcomes of […] case studies (Broadfoot 1977: 133).

This context-based perspective is even more important for adult education. Adult and continuing education is deeply integrated into societal, cultural, labour–market and international contexts. Rarely is adult education offered by state actors. The provision of adult education is highly dependent on the engagement of other societal actors (e.g. the market and civil society). This means that, in contrast to school education, adult education is rarely compulsory. Moreover, the provision of adult education can change at a much faster rate, depending on the influence of the context (e.g. financial situation, learning needs, targets of providers, participation rate). Due to this influence, adult education provision has to be highly responsive to its context. Studying the contexts and their interrelationships in the research situation can be understood as a central feature of comparative research in adult education.

By emphasising contexts (rather than states) as a comparative perspective (e.g. liberal adult education provision by trade unions compared to liberal adult education by religious providers in Europe; adult education studies at the University of Würzburg compared to the University of Florence), the state-based perspective will become less precise and the comparative perspective can become more precise. Furthermore, a main context for comparison is defined, which can further be researched concerning its influencing contexts (e.g. the Core Curriculum for Adult Education of the German Association for Educational Research on Studies at the University of Würzburg; the influence of the Bologna Process on both studies). The research on these interrelating contexts can form a central basis for the interpretation of similarities and differences.

2. Comparative adult education as an issue of relationships

Comparison in education research is becoming more complex, due to the issues raised by the internationalisation and globalisation of societies, the increasing influence of international organisations, and transnational developments (Welsch 1999). In many cases, it is not only or mainly the nation state that influences an educational context. Adult education contexts also have to be understood in their interdependencies with other (non–national) contexts. These can be educational and non–educational contexts, supra– and transnational contexts, cultural and societal contexts, community contexts or other contexts of adult learning (e.g. working context, leisure contexts). Comparative research into adult education needs to identify research contexts or cases that are interrelated. Early researchers

in comparative education claimed that learning about their own context was their ultimate goal: «The practical value of studying, in a right spirit and with scholarly accuracy, the working of foreign systems of education is that it will result in our being better fitted to study and understand our own» (Sadler 1900, reprint 1964: 310). Sadler refers to the situation that comparative education does not compare two contexts in the same way and with the same goal. Comparative research does not gain equal results from each researched context. Moreover, there are one or more main contexts upon which comparative research is focused. Other contexts will be used for mirroring the main context. Other contexts will be researched for making interrelations, working on similarities, differences and/or interpretations as well as explanations. This approach is based on an understanding of comparative education that studies the 'relationship networks' (Schriewer 2000) of the object of research and its contexts. This context-based perspective forms a central element of comparative research. Research investigations in comparative adult education need to define the contexts of the researched objectives and questions.

One of the frequently cited frameworks for comparative education is a cube developed by Bray and Thomas (1995: 475). The authors outline three dimensions of 'A Framework for Comparative Educational Analysis'. They distinguish between geographical/locational levels, non-locational demographic groups, and aspects of education and society, arguing that the combination of these three dimensions has to be taken into account for the definition of research in comparative education. This cube already starts to differentiate different locational levels, arguing that a pure country-comparison is too limited, narrowing phenomena in education. As early as the 1990s, some researchers criticised the strong focus on the national level in comparative education. But nevertheless, the cube integrates a level-based perspective, assuming that the lower levels are completely integrated in the upper levels. Cross-, trans- and supranational influences and interdependencies are not taken into account.

The context perspective proposed in this paper breaks down the purely hierarchical perspective into an interdependent perspective of relating contexts. It argues that a territorial perspective (geographic/locational) hardly makes sense in 2016. Adult education and its formation is not bounded solely by territorial borders. Rather, it is influenced by diverse societal and historical contexts. Thus, adult education contexts in two different countries may be more similar than adult education contexts within one country. Moreover, the above mentioned discourse on transnational developments leads to a perspective that identifies contexts within their interrelations to other contexts. Whereas the cube was developed from the perspective of school education and the strong influence of relevant state sectors, adult education is integrated in society in more diverse, fluid and diffuse ways.

Figure 3.1 – A Framework for Comparative Educational Analysis. [Bray and Thomas 1995: 475]
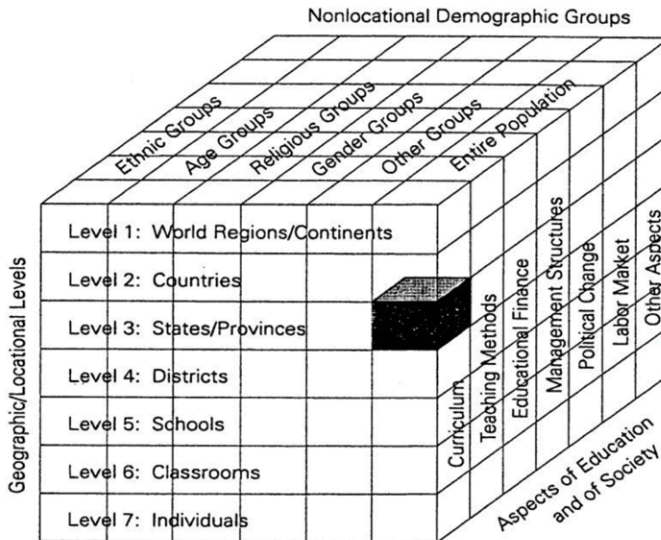
Likewise, the other two dimensions also have to be modified to fit into the research and practice field of adult education. Adult education studies participants, non–participants and learners with a learning, education and social biography that has a fundamental impact on their learning and educational habits. Adult education research shows that adults' educational biography, migration biography, employment situation, civic engagement and gender have a strong impact on their learning and education. This is why this dimension has to be modified to address the research differences in adult education compared to school education. The dimension 'aspects of education and of society' needs to be modified according to the research structure of adult education, as will be outlined below.

Whereas Bray, Adamson and Mason (2014) in newer publications have partly broken down all three dimensions into research units (places, systems, times, etc.), this chapter adapts the 'cube perspective' to comparative research in adult education. It defines three dimensions for the development of research questions in comparative adult education: (1) transnational contexts, (2) provision and effect and (3) (non–)participants and learners.

- *Transnational contexts* form the spatial perspective «in which an "educational" object of comparison is located» (Manson 2011: 163): the cross–contextual dimension.
- The dimension *provision and effects* focuses on research questions in adult education.

- The provision contexts have to be interrelated with *(non-)participants and learners* in adult education. This aspect forms a third dimension in its own right. Adult education provision and effects can only be researched in relation to the biographies and demographic backgrounds of (non-)participants and learners in adult education.

The main arguments for the further development of the Bray and Thomas cube for comparative research in adult education are: (1) Adult education is fundamentally different from school education, both in terms of provision and in terms of adult learners. Furthermore, adult education as a discipline has research categories that differ from school education. Research categories in adult education are more deeply interrelated with the specific situation of adult education practice as it is outlined above. This means that research issues have a configuration that differs from school education. (2) Based on transnational developments, a shift from a hierarchical, vertical or horizontal perspectives of comparative contexts to an interrelated perspective of contexts is needed. While the horizontal perspective looks at contexts alongside each other (Bray, Adamson and Mason 2014), the vertical perspective provides analysis of the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. This means, for example, that phenomena at the micro-level are researched concerning their influences on the macro- and meso-level. The hierarchical perspective would research the direct interactions between the macro level and the meso- and micro-levels, and so on. The transnational perspective, by contrast, focuses on contexts. Studying the formation and configuration of the relationships between different contexts is a distinct part of the comparative research question.

Studying just one aspect of adult education in different countries and specific demographic groups does not meet the needs of research designs in comparative adult education. Instead, research designs may need to define the focus of *provision and effects* in adult education and identify *relevant transnational contexts*. How the contexts under research relate to each other forms the central issue of comparative interpretation. The question concerning similarities and differences as well as their interpretation through reasonable hypotheses is based on the contexts being researched and the relations that exist between them. During the whole research process, it is essential to reflect on the influence of the biographical and demographic characteristics of the respective *(non-)participants and learners*. A comparative study on workplace learning in two companies, for example, should take account of both the organisational influence and the educational biographies of the learners. For example, researchers comparing National Qualifications Frameworks need to analyse the influence of the respective countries and that of the European Union. A central point is the interrelation of transnational contexts with the relevant aspect of adult education.

Figure 3.2 – A Relationship Model for Comparative Research in Adult Education. [Author's own]
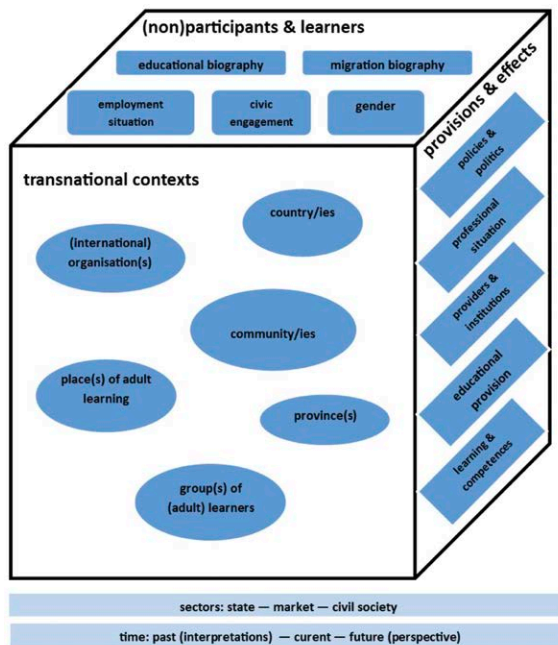
Furthermore, the relevant societal sector (state, market, civil society) of adult education has to be reflected when developing the research question. It can be expected that the contexts, provision and effects, (non-)participants and learners as well as their interrelations are highly dependent on the societal sectors which influence the research context. The second edition of Bray, Adamson and Mason's *Comparative Education Research* (2014: 423) also includes a time perspective. This perspective stresses that the context of educational phenomena is influenced by the respective time, and that comparative education can also compare educational phenomena in different times (e.g. present and 20 years ago).

Research in comparative adult education needs to reflect these interrelations. Comparative research in adult education needs to respect the practices and research of the discipline. Research issues in adult education emerge also as comparative issues. These categories are named here as provision and effects of adult education and adults learning. Doing comparative research in adult education means interrelating the research clusters and categories of the discipline with two further dimensions. The first dimension concerns (non-)participants and learners in adult education and learning: provision and effects in adult education depend on the respective (non-)participants and learners. This has to be taken into ac-

count when identifying comparative research issues in adult education. This identification is essential for making a more precise assessment of the provision aspect. The second dimension involves the recognition that interrelating transnational contexts form the comparative transnational contexts. Comparative research in adult education has to identify the contexts that will be compared and the relevant interrelated contexts that influence the comparison.

3. Issues in comparative adult education

3.1 Policies

One of the currently central fields in comparative adult education is the comparative analysis of policies in lifelong learning and their interrelation with different contexts. These contexts are the ones that influence the development and existence of policies in lifelong learning (e.g. international organisations, regional laws, economy). This has to be considered in the context of the engagement of international organisations (such as the EU, UNESCO/UIL, OECD, World Bank) in the promotion of lifelong learning. It frequently includes the formulation of policies, which in some cases target adult education directly and in others target adult education through a general concept of lifelong learning (Schemmann 2007; Bray, Adamson and Mason 2014). Studies can also be driven by, interrelated with, or critical of the policies to be analysed. Research acts in this context as a policy-driver and/or disciplinary configuration, and this aspect also needs to be reflected (Egetenmeyer 2015).

> The Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education of the European Society of Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) has recently worked on the analysis of the background developments of international policies towards adult education suggesting investigation of decision-making processes, including appropriation and resistance by a multiplicity of political actors (Holford and Milana 2014: 7).

With this approach, the network provides important research results for the interpretation of the different transnational influences on adult education policies. Thereby, it focuses on the educational policy of the European Union as one of the most important interpretative models. The Europeanisation process refers not only to the vertical dimension (EU–member state); it is also characterised by horizontal dynamics (nation state–nation state). The horizontal dynamics result from the exchange of ideas, power and policies between member states' actors, created by the context provided by the EU. The horizontal process creates a culture

of cooperation, which includes the harmonisation of ideas and policies between the member states or between a member and a non-member state. Horizontal linkages put pressure on actors without the involvement of supranational institutions. Horizontal cooperation may also create linkages to other transnational organisations and non-EU members (Klatt 2014: 65).

This perspective is supported by results of ad-hoc comparisons undertaken during the 2015 Würzburg Winter School on Comparative Studies in Adult and Lifelong Learning (Egetenmeyer 2016). The studies support the linkage between EU educational policies and the educational policies of non-EU members (for India see also Singh, Bora and Egetenmeyer [forthcoming]).

Schemmann (2007) compared the lifelong learning policies of international organisations: the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank and the EU. He analysed them using globalisation and internationalisation theories. Alongside policies, he also analysed the institutions' activities, action strategies, and the results they achieved. From the perspective of comparative research in adult education, the action strategies are especially interesting. Each of these international organisations have nation states as their members, but they do not have direct intervention authority in educational issues. Education remains the responsibility of the member states. Nevertheless, international organisations developed action strategies that govern member states in their policies (e.g. public benchmarks in adult education participation in Europe show member states how they compare to other member states). This can lead to a political reaction. Thereby the action strategies (e.g. the EU's Open Method of Coordination, UNESCO's educational reporting or the OECD's peer-review processes) become a central issue, as efficacy is a central element for interpreting the transnational influence of international policies.

One key comparative study in the field of comparative policy studies in adult education is Holford *et al.* (2008). The authors researched lifelong learning policies in thirteen northern, eastern and central European countries. The study covers 'Population, Labour Market Trends and Patterns of Participation', 'The European Union and Lifelong Learning', 'Use of Lifelong Learning Concepts in National Policies' and other topics in this field. Furthermore, the study aims to provide a comparative typology of approaches towards lifelong learning (in Europe). The study and its chapters refer to the different contexts that have to be researched and taken into account for the interpretation of similarities and differences between national policies in lifelong learning. It explores the interrelations between national and European policies in lifelong learning but also the impact of demographics and labour market factors on national policies towards lifelong learning. The study tests two comparative typologies (Esping-Andersen 1993; Aiginger and Guger 2006; Björnavåld

2001) for a comparative interpretation cluster of national lifelong learning policies. Both typologies have been used in comparative research in lifelong learning. The study concludes that neither typology works for developing types of lifelong learning policies and practices by which countries can be differentiated. Other studies focus on regions for the comparative research of adult education policies (Agentur für Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung 2016).

Comparative adult education research with a focus on policy issues is frequently aimed at supporting policy development. An important example is Federighi's (2013) analysis of research results within the EU Research Framework Programmes (see *Selected Readings* Chapter 1). The analysis of the different data can also be understood as a comparison that seeks to identify similarities in the country-based dataset. The analysis of Federighi does not work on simplified similarities. Moreover, it provides a new relational perspective based on the differences between European countries. It takes a development perspective for the interpretation of similarities, thereby identifying a new perspective towards the development of adult education in Europe.

3.2 Professional situation

Comparisons of the professional situation in adult education focus on the people working in the field, comparing matters such as: their qualifications, their working contexts, their abilities and competences, their training possibilities as well as the academic context of adult education. Although professionalisation in adult education can be understood as a central foundation for enhancing the quality of provision, there are very few broad comparative studies in this field. In contrast, research on professionalisation forms a broad field in adult education in Germany (Ludwig and Baldauf-Bergmann 2010). Nevertheless, several international research networks have been developed in recent years, working on the issue of professionalisation in adult education from an international perspective. The work of these networks also includes comparative perspectives. Two networks have been developed and initiated by the German Institute for Adult Education. (Besides the European Network on Q-Act-Conference/Qualify-to-Teach, there is also the Network on the Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators in countries of the Asia-Europe Meeting Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning [ASEM Hub for LLL]). ESREA has also developed a Research Network on Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development.

Most of these studies give interesting insights, including comparative perspectives, rather than doing genuine comparative research as defined above. They give insights into selected aspects of professionalisation rather than analysing the interdependencies and interrelations of different con-

texts. This situation can be explained by the diverse professional situations of people working in adult education. The situation is already very heterogeneous within different social sectors in local contexts. Therefore, comparative categories need to be developed that have equivalencies and realities in different transnational contexts. (If we start to compare the working conditions of adult learning professionals, for example, we have to identify professionals in the different contexts to develop a comparative research category.)

A number of initial studies exist to provide an insight into the professional situation in adult education. The situation of professionals in adult learning is researched in the ALPINE study (Research voor Beleid 2008; Osborne 2009) as part of a project financed by the European Commission. Based on ad-hoc data gathering, the study gives an insight into employers, tasks, positions, career paths and the employment situation of professionals in adult learning. In a follow-up study, a similar consortium developed the so-called Key-Competences-Model for professionals supporting adult learning in Europe (Research voor Beleid 2010). The perspective of transnationally relevant professional competences in adult education is the subject of several studies, including studies researching different (national) contexts for formulating transnationally valid professional competences in adult education (Lattke and Nuissl 2008; Bernhardsson and Lattke 2011, 2012; Zarifis and Papadimitriou 2014; Wahlgren 2016). Comparative studies on teaching cultures and the professional identities of adult educators are an important perspective in several studies (Peters, Latham, Ragland and Conaghy 2008; Bernhardsson and Lattke 2012a). Comparative research on instruments for the validation of adult educators' competences examines the use and implementation of these instruments (Sava and Shah 2015).

From a macro perspective, the ASEM Network on the Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators in ASEM countries carries out research in different regions in Europe and Asia (Egetenmeyer and Nuissl 2010). Based on Freidson's theoretical approach toward professionalism, Doyle, Egetenmeyer, Singai and Devi (2016) analyse German, British and Indian organisations supporting and monitoring professionalisation in adult and lifelong learning. With the advent of the Bologna Process, the study of Masters programmes in various European countries also became a topic of research (Lattke 2012; Boffo *et al.* 2016).

This overview shows a need for developing categories that can be compared in the context of transnational research on professionalisation in adult education. It seems that European educational policies have created comparative categories (e.g. competences, validation, Masters programmes) that are external to the academic terminology of adult education. Future work on professionalisation in adult education needs critical reflection on this situation from a disciplinary perspective. It is

necessary to develop comparative categories and terminologies that are closely linked to the disciplinary discourse in adult education. This will avoid a non-critical use of a terminology introduced by international political organisations, which often lacks academic reflection.

3.3 Providers and Institutions

Like the professional situation, providers and institutions in adult education also vary considerably. There are several reasons for this. First, the role of the state, the economy and civil society/third sector in adult (and continuing) education is quite different from context to context. Only some countries (e.g. Switzerland) and regions (e.g. all German regions) have laws pertaining to adult and continuing education. Second, employers' engagement in continuing education depends on firm size, industry, employee positions, trade unions and the economic cycle (Dämmrich, Vono de Vilhena and Reichart 2014). And third, the role of civil society also varies from context to context. As the development of providers and the formation of institutions strongly depend on these dynamic contexts, giving an overview of the institutional situation in a limited context would be a challenging task. Nevertheless, research provides selected comparative insights into providers and institutions in adult education.

Based on a comparative research project within the EU Research Framework Programme, Saar and Ure (2013) developed a typology of 'lifelong learning systems' from a sociological perspective. They derive and interrelate the typology with several societal factors such as a country's education and training system, the skill formation systems as well as forms of capitalism. These can be used for testing the influence of these societal aspects on the formation of adult education institutions. These macro-perspectives on differentiation between types of 'knowledge societies' can also be found in Green (2006) and, with a special focus on the Nordic welfare state model, in Rubenson (2006). Several studies research the influence of varieties of capitalism (individual perspective) and the welfare-state regimes (societal perspective) on the development of (national) adult learning systems (cf. Desjardins and Rubenson 2013; Rees 2013). For a comparative analysis, the methodological perspective should also be taken into account (e.g. Ebbinghaus 2012).

The institutional focus in adult education research has most commonly fallen on institutions of higher education. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus of research on adult learners in higher education environments. The volume edited by Slowey and Schuetze (2012) on higher education and lifelong learners is one of the central studies in this field. It focuses on the engagement of higher education in non-traditional or adult learning in different countries. Although the structure may look like a classical cross-country study, the introduction and epilogue relate the topic to other

contexts of the relational model for comparative adult education outlined above. In an inductive manner, it identifies a typology of target groups of non-traditional (adult) learners in higher education (second chance learners, underrepresented learners, deferrers, recurrent learners, returners, refreshers, learners in later life) (*ibidem*: 15) and the main conceptions of lifelong learning provision (life stage, mode of study, type of programme, organisation of provision) (*ibidem*: 13). The study provides a strong link to the perspective of (non-)participants in adult education and the question of equality in the provision of adult learning. The epilogue differentiates learning in higher education according to the different types of institutions involved (polytechnics, universities, etc.), creating a developed landscape of lifelong learning. It shows the provision of lifelong learning to be less available at (elite) universities than at polytechnics or adult education institutions but also more homogenous than in continuing education or work-based learning (*ibidem*: 286). This triangle of provision, (non-)participants and institutional constitution of adult learning also offers a focus for other researchers in the field of comparative studies in lifelong learning in higher education (Remdisch and Beiten 2016; Field, Schmidt-Hertha and Waxenegger 2016).

For several years, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has supported an initiative for the development of the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). It stresses the role of the public authorities in supporting education and learning for society as a whole (Osborne, Kearns and Yang 2013). The comparative research of the GNLC in different regions studies the communal engagement of learning cities. Han and Makino (2013, 2014), for example, distinguish between a 'community relation model' (collective approach) and the European emphasis on human resources (individual approach).

3.4 Educational provision and participants

The current state of comparative knowledge about adult educational provision is rather undeveloped. Hefler and Markowitsch (2013) distinguish between seven types of formal adult education: basic skill programmes, second-chance education, higher education programmes, (re)-training, customised vocational programmes, continuing higher education and continuing professional education. They break down existing formal adult education opportunities by variety in institutions and length/content of programmes, and compare these between different European countries. A similar typology of non-formal and other adult education options is not available.

Comparative research about educational provision can be found indirectly in studies that research participants, non-participants and learners in adult education. The interdisciplinary research on participation and equality in adult education analyses participation as an indicator of the supply of non-formal learning provision for adults. In this context,

research on participation in adult education can also be understood as research on education provision: by focusing on the question of who is participating in adult education, the research also looks at who is providing adult and continuing education and in which context.

Roosmaa and Saar (2010, 2012) analyse data from the Adult Education Survey. They take a theoretical perspective on institutional employment and labour-market structures in different countries. From a macro perspective, the study identifies institutional regimes that are analysed comparatively with the AES country data. The study interrelates the adult and continuing education supply with the situation of the corresponding economic context (skill formation in different types of political economies; innovation, demand for skills and training; occupational and qualification structure). The authors identify positive interrelations between participation in non-formal learning and the distribution of occupations (instead of qualifications). Furthermore, the researchers find adult education participation to have a positive impact on the reduction of inequalities suffered by low-skilled workers. This macro-perspective gives a new insight for the comparative analysis of participation data in adult education. Based on these studies, Markowitsch, Käpplinger and Hefler (2013) differentiate five welfare-state regimes (social democratic, conservative, familiaristic/sub-protective, liberal, neo-liberal and neo-conservative). The authors identify several similar developments of firm-provided trainings in the countries under research (based on CVTS-data). But there are several open questions – especially developments between CVTS 1 and CVTS 3 data, which cannot be explained by these regimes. Dämmrich, Vono de Vilhena and Reichart (2014) also research country-specific characteristics of participation in adult learning using the AES data. They find factors such as a focus on education and innovation in a country, a lower unemployment rate and a higher union presence to contribute to increased non-formal employer-sponsored adult learning. Boeren, Nicaise and Baert (2010) develop a model emphasising the interdependency of individual decisions and education institutions' perceptions. This is interrelated with other influences on the individual micro-level and educational meso level. Groenez, Desmedt and Nicaise (2007) also show how the interrelations between the economy, the labour market, social security and labour market policy, education, culture/values and demography influence participation in lifelong learning.

3.5 Learning and competences

Adult learning does not only take place in the context of education provision. There are also informal and incidental ways of adult learning, which happen during other activities (e.g. work or leisure). This is why learning – and competences as one result of learning – form a distinct as-

pect of research in adult education. Comparative adult learning is a little researched field. The development of comparative adult learning will rely on the identification of comparative categories. Egetenmeyer (2011, 2012) identified categories of learning subjects, motivation, learning methods, resources and results for the comparative research of informal learning at the workplace. A comparative analysis of welfare regimes, learning motivation and the experiences of adults in formal adult education is available in Boeren, Nicaise, Roosmaa and Saar (2012).

The 2013 PIAAC report (OECD 2013; Rammstedt 2013) has made adults' competences in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments a focus of comparative research. Based on a standardised series of tests, adults between the ages of 16 and 65 in 24 countries were surveyed concerning these competences. Taking into account the fact that these results and the so-called competences are obviously limited to such narrow definitions as are necessary for this kind of research, the data give new insights into comparative research in adult education. Although the international lifelong learning community appreciates the availability of the dataset and has high expectations concerning research possibilities, there have also been criticisms regarding the missing perspective of the wider benefits of adult learning beyond the economic (e.g. Holm 2014).

In the Skills and Labour Market to Raise Youth Employment (SALM) project, a research group at the University of Florence links competences to higher education supply and demand in the social economy (Boffo 2012; Boffo, Federighi and Torlone 2015). This was researched in a comparative perspective in six European contexts. The study makes visible the interrelations between context, participants, labour market and globalisation.

Beside the studies exploring the impact on competences, there are also studies comparing the wage return of participation in adult education. In addition to individual differences (based on education and employment), these studies also find differences relating to engagement in formal as opposed to non-formal adult education and concerning the clustering of countries according to welfare regimes. Triventi and Barone (2014) use data from the International Adult Literacy Survey from the 1990s.

4. Conclusion

In summary, issues in adult education have been studied extensively using non-comparative methodologies, but comparative methodologies have been used much less frequently. This means there is much potential for comparative research projects. Furthermore, current transnational developments provide more and more insights for understanding educational phenomena in a global and transnational perspective.

Comparative studies undertaken by single researchers and with a narrow focus on educational theories seem to have very few connections to each other. At the same time, interdisciplinary comparative research projects are underway that focus on issues in adult education that interrelate much more extensively. These studies use (quantitative) data provided by international organisations. This situation makes it obvious that international policies have a strong influence on how issues in comparative adult education are researched. Furthermore, the results show that phenomena need to be studied from a broad interdisciplinary perspective to be understood in a comparative way. It can be expected that the interdisciplinary approach will characterise comparative adult education research in the future. Researchers in adult education need to work together with colleagues from different disciplines to get deeper insights. To that end, available datasets from international organisations can be used. This shows the links not only between contexts and phenomena in adult education but also to other theories, data and knowledge outside the educational perspective.

Although international organisations are now providing rich datasets, it should be kept in mind that these datasets are provided by political organisations and not by the academic community in adult education. This means that the decisions as to which data are collected follow a political rationale, not an (inter)disciplinary academic one. For comparative research in adult education, this means that the available datasets have to be translated into academic terminology to interrelate them with available disciplinary knowledge.

This overview of issues in comparative research has also shown that the perspective of participants and non–participants is a central cross-dimension for all research in (comparative) adult education. Adult education can only be analysed based on an understanding of who participates and who does not. Participant orientation is in this way not only a key didactical basis for adult education but also a crucial perspective for research.

Transnational developments that disconnect educational phenomena from narrow regional or national contexts require that the comparison of contexts becomes a central issue in comparative research. This issue is especially challenging for comparative research in adult education as not only comparable categories (what) but also comparable contexts (where, when and which) have to be identified and specified according to the research issue. In most cases, research cannot expect to use previously defined and tested categories or contexts. Testing categories and contexts in juxtaposition is a starting point for comparative research in adult education. Having finalised a juxtaposition, interrelating the data between the main contexts but also to other interrelating contexts is a central issue for the interpretation of similarities and differences of data. Only the interrelation to other contexts can explain similarities and differences. This approach can shed light on transnational interrelations, which are crucial for understanding contemporary phenomena in adult education.

Selected Readings

Mark Bray, Bob Adamson and Mark Mason (2014)
This book is a key introduction to comparative education. It provides
the reader with an introduction to numerous approaches to compara-
tive education and provides important foundations upon which to build
links between comparative adult education and comparative educa-
tion. Its approach towards comparative units gives an insight into issues
in comparative research in education. The excerpt given here includes
a discussion of the Bray and Thomas cube introduced in the foregoing
chapter (figure 3.1).

Bray M., Adamson B., Mason M. (2014), *Introduction*, in Bray M., Ad-
amson B., Mason M. (eds.), *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and
Methods* (2nd ed.), Comparative Education Research Centre, University
of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 1-11.

At the beginning of his classic book, *Comparative Method in Education*,
George Bereday (1964: 7) asserted that from the viewpoint of method,
comparative education was entering the third phase of its history. The first
phase, he suggested, spanned the 19th century, «was inaugurated by the first
scientifically minded comparative educator, Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris
in 1817», and might be called the period of borrowing. Bereday characte-
rized its emphasis as cataloguing descriptive data, following which com-
parison of the data was undertaken in order to make available the best
practices of one country with the intention of copying them elsewhere.
Bereday's second phase, which occupied the first half of the 20th century,
«interposed a preparatory process before permitting any transplantation».
Its founder, Sir Michael Sadler in the United Kingdom (UK), stressed that
education systems are intricately connected with the societies that support
them (see especially Sadler 1900). Sadler's successors, among whom Bereday
identified Friedrich Schneider and Franz Hilker in Germany, Isaac Kan-
del and Robert Ulrich in the United States of America (USA), Nicholas
Hans and Joseph Lauwerys in the UK, and Pedro Roselló in Switzerland,
all paid much attention to the social causes behind educational pheno-
mena. Bereday named this second phase the period of prediction. Bere-
day's third phase was labelled the period of analysis, with emphasis in 'the
evolving of theory and methods, [and] the clear formulation of steps of
comparative procedures and devices to aid this enlargement of vision'. The
new historical period, Bereday added (1964: 9), was a continuation of the
tradition of the period of prediction, but it postulated that 'before predic-
tion and eventual borrowing is attempted there must be a systematization
of the field in order to expose the whole panorama of national practices

of education'. Bereday's book itself greatly contributed to this analytical approach. The book remains core reading in many courses on comparative education, and still has much to offer.

[…]

The Bray and Thomas Cube

(See figure 3.1 in the foregoing chapter for a reproduction of the Bray and Thomas cube)

[…]

On the front of the face of the cube are seven *geographic/locational* levels for comparison: world regions/continents, countries, states/provinces, districts, schools, classrooms, and individuals. The second dimension contains *non-locational demographic* groups, including ethnic, age, religious, gender and other groups, and entire populations. The third dimension comprises *aspects of education and of society*, such as curriculum, teaching methods, finance, management structures, political change and labour markets. Many studies that are explicitly comparative engage all three dimensions, and thus can be mapped in the corresponding cells of the diagram. For example, the shaded cell […] represents a comparative study of curricula for the entire population in two or more provinces. An overarching point of the Bray and Thomas article was their call for multilevel analyses in comparative studies to achieve multifaceted and holistic analyses of educational phenomena. The authors observed that much research remained at a single level, thereby neglecting recognition of the way in which patterns at the lower levels in education systems are shaped by patterns at higher levels and vice versa. While researchers can often undertake only single-level studies because of constraints dictated by purpose and availability of resources, Bray and Thomas suggested that researchers should at least recognize the limits of their foci and the mutual influences of other levels on the educational phenomena of interest. The Bray and Thomas framework has been extensively cited, both in literature that is explicitly associated with the field of comparative education […] and in broader literature […]. It has generally been seen as useful, and some authors have endeavoured to take it further by making explicit what was already implicit in the framework. […] alternative categories are in fact already represented in the 'non-locational demographic' dimension of the framework, though rather than being 'non-locational' they might perhaps be more aptly termed 'pluri-locational' or 'multi-territorial'.

JOHN HOLFORD, SHIELA RIDDELL, ELISABET WEEDON, JUDITH LITJENS AND GUY HANNAN (2008)
This text gives an overview of lifelong learning policies and strategies in Europe and beyond. It can be understood as a core text in the

comparison of the lifelong learning policies that were developed in response to the publication of the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. It is a key text on comparative policy analysis in Europe and shows the strong influence of the EU's soft law approach in the field of lifelong learning. Thus, it not only shows differences but also central similarities in lifelong learning policies between different European states, while also demonstrating the impact of the EU's policies in lifelong learning. Furthermore, the text critically reflects the possibility of using Esping–Andersen's approach of welfare regimes to explain differences and similarities of educational phenomena between countries.

Holford J., Riddel S., Weedon E, Litjens J., Hannan G. (2008), *Patterns of Lifelong Learning: Policy and Practice in an Expanding Europe*, LIT Verlag, Vienna.

The concept and practice of lifelong learning in Europe has developed in close connection with wider political, economic, and social forces. This is true at both EU and national levels. Although there is broad consensus across Europe that lifelong learning can both enhance economic competitiveness and help generate social cohesion and stability, understandings of the concept are subject to wide variation and have to be viewed in relation to specific national contexts.

For these reasons, the project has studied lifelong learning in 13 countries. These include a range of EU member states and others. They are drawn from three main geographical areas: Northern, Eastern and Central Europe. They have diverse political, social, and economic histories; their educational system have also developed along varying paths. Their rich histories include many periods of convergence and divergence, however – especially over the past century. To take but three examples: in 1914 Ireland, Scotland and England formed parts of the United Kingdom; Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; while Estonia and Lithuania formed part of the Russian Empire [...] During the twentieth century, however, their histories have varied: Estonia and Lithuania enjoyed a brief period of independence between the two world wars, but were absorbed into the USSR in 1939; Hungary became independent from 1918, though it fell under German rule during the Second World War and into the Soviet 'sphere of influence' after 1945; Slovenia became an integral part of Yugoslavia; Austria remained independent after 1918, apart from a period of absorption into 'greater Germany'. Although educational policy and practice are not simply a product of history, we cannot make sense of the diversity of how lifelong learning has been understood and op-

erationalised without the awareness of the diversity – but also the commonalities – of these national histories[1].

[…]

since the 1990s lifelong learning has become a key term in the EU lexicon, and […] the EU has now established itself as a prime mover in the development of educational policy from lifelong perspective. In common with much other usage, though also for its own particular reasons, EU lifelong learning policy has taken a strongly vocational orientation. Although the EU's definition of lifelong learning has shifted over time, the version which currently has strongest official sanction is probably that contained in the 2002 Resolution of the EU Council:

Lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre–school age to that post–retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non–formal and informal learning. Furthermore, lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective (EU Council Resolution 27 June 2002, 2002/C 163/01)[2].

[…]

Although there is broad consensus within Europe that lifelong learning has an important part to play within the context of the current scale of economic and social change, there are widely varying understandings of the concept. There is also diversity in delivery, with variation at national and regional levels and for specific social groups. In the light of economic change and transformations within group and individual identities as a consequence of globalisation, we undertook comparative research on the development of lifelong learning policies and practices.

The purpose of this book is to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. We investigate the nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing. It considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union's thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each country. Lifelong learning can occur in all areas of social life: we therefore also consider how far the actions of different areas of policy and government support it, or hinder its development.

We applied a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning. Through analysing national policy documents and address-

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[1] pp. 9–10.
[2] p. 11.

ing lifelong learning in participating countries, the aims included: to assess critically the concept of lifelong learning at various levels; to investigate and develop a typology of different policies and initiative aimed at encouraging socially excluded groups to participate in lifelong learning[3].

[…]

There are differences in the extent to which the various concepts appear in national policies. The knowledge society features strongly in all thirteen countries. Most of the country policies also include the mention of learning organisations. There is less evidence for the learning citizen and learning cities/regions feature least in policies.

How the concepts are interpreted varies across the countries. Scotland, England, Estonia and Lithuania stress the human capital aspect of the *learning citizen*. In contrast Ireland, Slovenia and Norway focus more on the social capital and personal development aspect. However, where the human capital is emphasised, it is also noted that this can be a means to social inclusion.

There is less variation in the interpretation of the *knowledge society*. Generally the focus is on the development of human capital. The less used concept of *learning cities/regions* has been interpreted in two ways: providing the individual access to learning (Norway); or as community regeneration where the focus is on disadvantaged groups (England). Overall there is a sense that when this concept features it is linked to development of regional or decentralisation of learning opportunities. Finally, the concept of the learning organisations is in evidence in most countries but there is a difference between the emphasis put on individual organisations and their duty to provide education and training for their employees and putting nationwide structures in place that support companies in offering training for their employees.

In examining the way that these concepts are being used in different countries there is no clear divide between 'old' EU countries or Western democracies such as Norway and the new member states and post-communist states. For example, Lithuania, Scotland, England and Estonia seem to have a strong emphasis on human capital in their use of the concept of the learning citizen, whilst Ireland and Norway stress social capital more. It is not possible to provide a general explanation for this; however, it does suggest that the local conditions in the post-communist countries vary along a range of dimensions and the way that, for example, EU policy measures will be implemented will vary. Whilst there is likely to be variation in interpretation it is clear that EU definitions of the concepts have had an influence on all states and that this is perhaps

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[3] p. 17

specifically so in some of the new member and accession states where the definitions have been adopted with limited discussion.

Some of the main conclusions concerning concepts at national level are:

(i)   The significance of the concepts associated with lifelong learning varies across the countries.

(ii) By and large, concepts associated with lifelong learning are viewed as associated with adult or post-compulsory learning.

(iii) The knowledge society is probably the most widely understood concept.

(iv) There is less variation in understanding of the knowledge society concept.

(v)   Understanding of the knowledge society is strongly tied to a human capital model and thus does not fully reflect the EU definition of lifelong learning.

There are no clearly distinguishable differences in the way the concepts are used between 'old' EU countries or Western democracies and post-communist countries.[4]

[…]

There is a general trend across the countries of lifelong learning policies focusing on labour market issues, but there are differing reasons why this is the case. Post-communist countries tend to see lifelong learning as a way to enhance their economic development, whilst countries with established market economies place greater emphasis on maintaining economic performance and meeting necessary skills shortages. Increasing the employability of marginalised or disadvantaged groups is also viewed as enabling people to function more fully in society, and lifelong learning is seen as an important way of achieving this.

It is important to highlight that in practice these policy areas are often not mutually exclusive. Policies on education may appear to be geared towards economic outcomes, and social policies such as those on gender are often closely tied to the education system. Whilst recognising this interconnection, this chapter has illustrated the ways that different policy areas have focused on lifelong learning in the countries to show variations in emphasis[5].

[…]

In theory lifelong learning policy comes within the remit of ministries of education in the majority of countries; however, there is dual responsibility between that ministry and labour/employment ministries in a small number of countries. In practice it is clear that employment

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[4] p. 74.
[5] p. 84.

policies act as a strong driver of shaping the lifelong learning strategies as lifelong learning is seen as a means to achieving a highly skilled work-force that can adapt to the requirements of the knowledge society. The overall impression is that in several of the post–communist countries, the division of responsibility between different agencies is unclear, and this leads to some confusion in the formulation and implementation of policy.

The importance of employment policies can also be discerned in how they relate to lifelong learning and social policy. In this area lifelong learn-ing strategies are considered of importance in enabling social inclusion. In some Northern European Countries, e.g. Ireland, the emphasis on lifelong learning as a mechanism for dealing with disadvantage is clearly expressed; in other countries such as England and Scotland it is considered a means of moving those on social welfare into work through developing relevant skills. In general, social policies are often linked to labour market policies; this link is also noticeable by the mention of projects that focus specifi-cally on social inclusion through skills development that enhance employ-ability which have been supported by the European Social Fund (ESF)[6].

[…]

Understandings of lifelong learning within the countries studied in this research have been shaped by specific historical, economic and social developments. The post-communist societies tend to view lifelong learn-ing more as a way to enhance economic growth, whereas in countries with longer traditions of market economies it is seen as a means to build upon development in the face of increasing global competition. There is also a social control dimension to lifelong learning, and this may be ex-acerbated by tendencies to make learning compulsory in various ways.

We have not yet been able to identify a comparative typology which adequately reflects the diversity of approach in lifelong learning. The welfare models developed by Esping-Andersen and Castels have proved inadequate for various reasons […]. Those typologies that have been de-veloped do not generally cover Eastern and Central European countries, while Björnvåld's (2001) typology of lifelong learning focuses narrowly on non-formal education with an emphasis on methods of assessment. This leads to the danger of developing a typology focused on the human capital aspect of lifelong learning[7].

MARIA SLOWEY AND HANS G. SCHUETZE (2012)
Maria Slowey, Professor at Dublin City University and Hans G. Schuetze, emeritus Professor at University of British Columbia coordinated one of the very few global comparative studies in adult and continuing education.

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[6] p. 96.
[7] p. 127.

Concentrating on higher education the volume provides an important perspective for adult and continuing education. By using a comparative approach the editors analyse similarities of higher education and lifelong learning which are valid across national borders despite the differences of the countries. Using this approach they identify global phenomena in lifelong learning.

This extract comprises material from two of Slowey and Schuetze's own contributions to the volume: an introductory chapter on contemporary developments in lifelong learning, and an afterword assessing future possibilities for the field.

Slowey M. and Schuetze H.G. (eds) (2012), *Global Perspectives on Higher Education and Lifelong Learners*, Routledge, London and New York.

The classic role of universities in the formation and social reproduction of the next generation remains their most fundamental function, yet *systems* of higher education as a whole have changed dramatically in terms of the scale, the structure, the composition of the student body, patterns of governance, stakeholder involvement, the growth in graduate education and the emphasis on research […]. As a result, universities and other institutions of higher education have become significant economic, social and cultural players at local, regional, national and global levels and the subject of increasing attention at national and international policy levels – as is, for example, reflected in the findings of a comprehensive review of higher education policies in 24 countries (OECD 2008).

There has also been a steady growth in the resources invested in higher education, and even where public budgets ceased to grow (or were reduced due to the crisis of the banking and financial services systems at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century), institutions sought to diversify their income sources and make up for losses by increasing tuition and other fees, cutting scholarships and services, or, where these measures did not suffice to fill the gap, by cutting student enrolments and programmes.

[…]

In exploring the topic of lifelong learning in higher education, three factors need to be taken into consideration when looking behind these headline higher education participation figures. Firstly, one of the key comparative indicators of levels of participation is the Age Participation Rate (APR). This measures the proportion of the population of the typical school-leaving age cohort which progresses to higher education. By definition, this refers to young people, and only rarely are such measures used to explore levels of participation by adults in higher education. Secondly, much of the expansion in higher education over the last two decades has taken place in non-university institutions such as poly-

technics, community colleges, further education colleges and the like. The statistics therefore generally do not refer only to universities, but to participation across all types of higher education institutions. Thirdly, international statistics usually refer to full-time undergraduate entrants, whereas mature students are more likely to be found on part-time, distance, post-experience and non-credit programmes.

[…]

The active advocacy of lifelong learning by international organizations stood in contrast to their ability to implement a lifelong learning policy in the member countries. With the exception of the EU, which can legislate on matters for which it has the mandate, international organizations have no direct instrument of implementation. Nevertheless, higher education institutions were subject to, and arguably complicit with, the growing use of policy-steering mechanisms (Neave 2004). Thus, despite the fact that universities and other institutions of higher education in the various countries emerged from different traditions, and took on different organizational forms as they played their role in nation building, analyses of the contemporary trends in higher education suggest there is evidence of increasing convergence.

[…]

In Europe, for example, the major EU policy driver in relation to higher education builds on the original *Bologna Declaration* (1999). At a meeting in Prague in 2001, higher education ministers adopted (at least rhetorically) the promotion of lifelong learning as one of their joint policy objectives.

[…]

By 2011, with 47 countries involved, Bologna became *the* key mechanism to achieve a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), a Europewide framework of understanding with a view to greater transparency and the commonality of the structure of qualifications – including opportunities for credit transfer through ECTS (European Credit Transfer System).

Other regions of the world also moved rapidly in a similar direction: for example, regional groupings such as the Latin American and Caribbean Area for Higher Education (ENLACES), the African Union Harmonisation Strategy, and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, also seek further cross-global recognition for their qualification. A memorandum signed by the EU and Ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean is one such example.

[…]

These moves to harmonization could be seen as fostering new managerialism, new governance structures and paving the way for further marketization in higher education in Europe and elsewhere […]. However, as higher education policy remains a national responsibility, change is brought

about through indirect mechanisms. To take the EU again as an example, policy is steered through engagement with stakeholders and networks of experts, showcasing 'good practice' and inviting member countries to report on their policies and monitor progress. This 'open method of coordination' is notably efficient as a steering mechanism in shaping national policies by the use of informal mechanisms such as peer pressure […]. Policy steering can, however, also be accompanied by targeted funding and it is important, especially in times of financial stringency in many countries, not to underestimate 'the power of the purse' and the considerable financial leverage provided by EU-funded higher education programmes […]

While higher education systems are subject to common economic, social and demographic pressures resulting in increasing levels of participation by adults in higher education, evidence from our earlier comparative study suggests that the differentials *between* countries appear remarkably persistent over time. In 2000, building on our earlier OECD study (1987) we developed a three-fold grouping of countries along a continuum relating to the levels of adult participation in higher education.

1. Countries with relatively high levels of participation by adult learners and demonstrating a relatively high degree of flexibility in relation to entry criteria and study patterns: this category included Sweden and the United States.

2. Countries where there were significant, but lower, proportions of adult learners across the system as a whole, and where adult students were frequently located in open universities or dedicated centres of adult or continuing education within 'mainstream' institutions: this category included Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK.

3. Countries with low levels of adult participation in higher education: this category included Austria, Germany, Ireland and Japan.

[…]

Four main conceptions of lifelong learning emerge from the country chapters.

- The first focuses on the *life stage* of the learner. This perspective addresses the significant proportion of students who do not progress directly from initial education (school) to higher education, but who come to study after a period of engagement in economic, social and/ or civic life. There is a close association with age at entry to higher education (older than the average) which is then used in many countries as a proxy for 'lifelong learners'.
- The second focuses on the *mode of study* – including part-time, open learning, distance education and e-learning opportunities. Students studying on such part-time or flexible bases are used in some countries as a proxy for 'lifelong learners'.
- The third focuses on the *type of programme* – often with a continuing professional development (CPD) orientation, or in partnership

with employers, such as Masters programmes, non–credit, adult and community courses. Many countries report an expansion of post-experience courses, often on a full cost basis, or on the periphery of universities and other higher education institutions.

• The fourth focuses on the organization of provision – including specialist institutions ('open universities' of various types), centres with dedicated missions for continuing education (often full-cost units within public institutions) and, in some countries, the rapid expansion of private providers (which are often disproportionately attended by learners from under-represented and non-traditional groups).

The addition of Portugal, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa to the original group of ten countries provides invaluable new perspectives. Lifelong learning in higher education is not high on the agenda of the latter three countries as their primary focus is on dealing with enormous inequalities in initial levels of education […].

[…]

The chapters on Portugal, Mexico and Brazil also highlight an emerging trend whereby measures to increase levels of participation by under-represented groups of learners to higher education, without supporting this expansion through adequate public funds, mean that the latter groups of learners tend to be disproportionately represented in a private sector of variable quality.

[…]

Emerging from the case studies we identify three aspects to consider in any such categorization: the nature of the entry/admission qualification; the access route; and the primary motivation for higher education study.

i. Second chance learners: Those without traditional formal entry qualifications (such as *Abitur*, A–Levels, *Baccalaureate*, Leaving Certificate, High School Diploma or the like), who enter the higher education via a special entrance examination or assessment, and who are usually coming to higher education later in life on a *second chance* basis.

ii. Equity groups: Those who are from socio–economic or other groups which are *under-represented* in higher education and the focus of national or institutional equity policies – relating, for example, to gender, to those from working-class or particular socio-economic backgrounds, to indigenous people, to migrants, to people living in remote rural areas or to those with disabilities.

iii. Deferrers: Those who *defer* entry to higher education, following completion of secondary education and gaining appropriate qualifications because they decided at that stage to enter employment or to pursue other activities such as voluntary work, travel, community engagement or family responsibilities.

iv.   Recurrent learners: Those – an increasing number as many chapters
      show – who have a first degree or diploma who are *recurrent learners*
      returning to higher education for a further, usually higher, degree.
      Some of these use recently established national frameworks of qual-
      ifications in many countries, and/or recognition of prior learning
      (RPL) to *change direction* between, for example, a vocational route
      and an academic route. Such learners have a variety of motivations
      ranging from those who judge they need an additional or different
      qualification for employment and professional purposes, to those who
      have a continuing interest and love of learning for its own sake.
v.   Returners: Those who take advantage of the flexibility in the higher
      education structures of some countries, to *drop-in* higher education,
      having 'dropped-out' or deferred at an earlier stage for a variety of
      reasons. Such learners often see their higher education experience
      as woven into the fabric of their lives, rather than being discrete and
      finite.
vi.   Refreshers: Overlapping with a number of the above sub-catego-
      ries, there are those who, as professionals and with or without tra-
      ditional educational qualifications, enrol in continuing education
      programmes to *refresh* their knowledge and skills.
vii. Learners in later life: Finally, reflecting the demographic trends in
      many of the richer countries, there are the *third age* (or, increasing-
      ly, *fourth age*) learners, who, from a wide variety of educational and
      social backgrounds enrol in (mainly) non-credit higher education
      programmes for personal development purposes.

While the balance varies between countries, examples of all the above
are found to different degrees. In Japan, for example, the last version
above, liberal learning in later life, traditionally formed the dominant
conception of lifelong learning in higher education […]. In New Zea-
land, Ireland and the UK on the other hand, lifelong learners and adult
learners are still often used as synonyms for each other […][8].
   […]
Revisiting our original group of ten countries a decade later, we find
that, despite continuing expansion of their higher education systems, and
increases in participation rates, the composition of three broad country
groupings remains relatively unchanged. We do, however, also find chal-
lenges and contradictions that might be described as 'one step forward
and two steps back'. This particularly applies to the crucially important
opportunity for lifelong learners to study on a part-time basis. Even in
countries where flexibility has been fairly well embedded in the system

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[8] pp. 5-16.

of higher education (for example, Sweden, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA), part-time provision, a cornerstone of access for many categories of lifelong learners, is under pressure. There are many reasons for this apparently counterintuitive finding. Our analysis of the country case studies draws attention to three in particular.

- Firstly, the global financial crisis and associated pressures on public finances for higher education teaching is leading to a (re)enforcement of 'full-time' students in many systems as the core source of institutional funding. Even in public institutions, part-time students (especially at the postgraduate level) are increasingly being viewed as important fee-paying 'customers' in a quasi-market environment.
- Secondly, the market increases emphasis on research output (and associated rankings criteria – to which we return below) places increased pressures on academic staff, relegating the teaching of 'marginal' students to a low priority.
- Thirdly, there is an increased focus at national and international levels (including the Bologna Process in Europe) on universities and other institutions of higher education achieving greater 'efficiency', 'throughput' and graduation rates. While desirable from certain financial and educational perspectives, a – probably unintended – consequence is that this emphasis is leading to a reduction in the genuine flexibility for lifelong learners to drop-in and drop-out of higher education (as in the Swedish model) as suits their learning requirements at different stages over their lifecourse.

Johanna Dämmrich, Daniela Vono de Vilhena and Elisabeth Reichart (2014)
The following text is an ambitious study in the context of comparative adult education. Using data from the Adult Education Survey (AES) the authors attempt to identify participation patterns in country-cohorts. For the interpretation of differences and similarities, they use the frequently cited Esping-Andersen welfare regimes. Using this approach, the text also shows possibilities and limitations of interpreting similarities and differences in adult education from a country-cohort perspective.

Dämmrich J., Vono de Vilhena D. and Reichart E. (2014), *Participation in Adult Learning in Europe: The Impact of Country-Level and Individual Characteristics*, in Blossfeld, H.-P., Klipi-Jakonen E., Vono de Vilhena D., Buchholz S. (eds.), *Adult Learning in Modern Societies. An international Comparison from a Life-course Perspective*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 29-53.

Comparative analyses of participation in adult learning have shown that there are significant country differences in overall participation rates

and in the characteristics of participants. This suggests that the degree to which adult learning contributes to social equalization differs among countries. However, differences in data sources, definitions of adult learning, and varying reference periods make cross–national comparisons of adult learning difficult […]. In line with that, data on adult learning that include more than one country are rare. After the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), which focuses on the 1990s and is used in the following chapter for analyzing returns to adult learning, the Adult Education Survey (AES) of 2007 is one of the most recent comparative datasets on adult learning. Thus, the AES facilitates the direct comparison of different types of adult learning among countries. Using this data for 26 European countries, our chapter aims to answer the following research questions: (1) How do participant rates in job–related adult learning differ among countries and among different types of adult-learning? (2) Which individual characteristics influence participation in different types of job–related adult learning? (3) Are there differences regarding the influence of gender and initial educational level among countries? (4) Which characteristics at the country level influence participation in different job–related adult learning activities?

[…]

Definitions of adult learning vary greatly among studies, making comparisons between the findings of empirical studies difficult […]. The definitions of job–related formal and non–formal adult learning applied in this chapter are based on our dataset. Accordingly, formal adult learning takes place in regular school and university systems, where the academic content is mostly based on nationally regulated curricula and the education leads to recognized certificates. Non–formal adult learning can take place both within or outside of educational institutions, the content on different topics can be more specific, and the learning activities have varying duration […]. Beyond this distinction, empirical evidence further demonstrates the importance of taking the employer's involvement into account […]. Therefore, we extend the definition of adult learning and distinguish between four different types of adult learning activities in the following sections: employer-sponsored formal and non–formal adult learning, as well as formal and non–formal adult learning without employer support. Moreover, we only focus on job–related adult learning activities.

[…]

In the following section, we take a look at the literature concerning the influencing factors of adult learning and derive some hypotheses about the influence of individual and country-specific characteristics on participation. When analyzing adult learning, it is important to bear in mind that various factors at different levels might influence participation rates.

[…]

While the influence of macro-level characteristics (such as characteristics of the educational system or the labour market) has been less thoroughly explored, the influence of micro-level characteristics on adult learning has more often been examined. In the following, we refer first briefly to micro-level characteristics before discussing the influence of macro-level factors on adult learning. [9]

[…]

The higher the age, the less likely individuals are to participate in any type of adult learning. This result is in concordance with the human capital theory […], which states that younger individuals have a higher probability of participating in adult learning due to higher net returns over the remaining life course […]. The degree of urbanization matters only for formal adult learning without employer support. Thus, persons living in thinly populated areas have a lower probability of attending longer educational activities. This could be due to a lack of appropriate offers and to greater distances to the next educational institution […]. Moreover, the results of the multilevel analysis indicate that the larger the firm is, the more likely individuals are to attend employer-sponsored adult learning activities. While this result has also been found in other studies […], it indicates that, on the one hand, larger firms have better opportunities to offer training to their workforce. On the other hand, this positive relationship might also mirror the fact that firms with a certain number of employees are obligated to offer adult learning in some countries.

Individuals with fixed-term working contracts have a lower probability of participating in non-formal employer-sponsored activities, yet they are more likely to attend formal employer-sponsored activities. This result suggests that in the case of non-formal adult learning, employers might invest more in persons with permanent job contracts in order to bring these individuals up to date.

[…]

To arrive at our main research interest, the influence of education and gender on adult learning, our results strongly support the *Matthew effect hypothesis*, which posits that better-educated persons participate more often in non-formal adult learning than their lower-educated counterparts. However, the same educational effect is also found for formal adult learning activities. The effect is very robust in both cases, and it seems as if education is the most important influencing factor for participation. This could be due to a complementary relationship between initial and adult learning and/or because of higher skill requirements and higher learning capacity of better-educated persons […]. The multilevel analysis

[9] pp. 29-34.

indicates that women are more likely to participate in all types of adult learning compared with men. While the *gendered participation hypothesis* suggests a higher probability for women to attend non–employer-sponsored learning activities, the results only partly support this hypothesis.

To test our hypothesis regarding a differing influence of gender and education on participation in adult learning in different country groups, we examine interaction effects between country groups and the two individual level variables. […] Better–educated individuals are more likely to participate in all types of adult-learning in all country groups. We find only weak support for the *country-specific partial equalizing hypothesis*, which posits that differences in the probability of participating in formal adult learning between lower- and higher–educated individuals are smaller in Nordic and liberal countries than in Central and Southern Countries. Thus, as expected, the difference between higher- and lower-educated individuals is most pronounced in Southern countries. However, Nordic countries also show comparably high differences between lower- and higher-educated individuals in formal employer-sponsored adult learning, whereas liberal and Central European Countries show less pronounced differences. In formal non-employer-sponsored adult learning the differences between Nordic, Central, and liberal countries are very small regarding the difference in the probability of the participation of higher- and lower-educated individuals. Consequently, we do not find significant differences between Nordic and liberal countries, on the one hand, and Central countries, on the other hand. Rather, we find that Central countries are similar to Nordic and liberal countries, while Southern (and the remaining post-socialist countries) seem to form another group. Besides the structure of the educational systems, welfare state support and active labor market policies are also likely to influence participation patterns between higher- and lower-educated individuals. Thus, the difference between Central and Southern European countries could be a result of lower–educated individuals' lack of (time and financial) resources to participate in formal adult learning in Southern countries. In turn, welfare state support and active labor market policies are higher in Central countries, and this might facilitate the participation of lower–educated individuals.

[…]

Moreover, we find that the higher the expenditures in education in a country are, the more likely participation is in formal adult learning without employer support and in non–formal activities with employer-support. Higher expenditures in education in general could also indicate higher expenditures and support specific for adult learning, which might be one reason for the higher participation levels in formal adult learning. The positive influence of public expenditures in education on non-formal employer-sponsored learning activities could be a result of

country-specific programs that promote non-formal learning activities and are co-sponsored by employers and states […].

The higher public expenditures on R&D, the higher the probability in both types of non-employer-sponsored and in non-formal employer-sponsored adult learning is. On the one hand, this positive effect indicates that an employee's probability of investing in adult learning increases if there is a greater orientation toward innovation and technology. The employees probably invest in their human capital to stay up to date and to not be replaced by younger or better-educated persons. Employers, on the other hand, might invest in the training of their workforce (non-formal employer-sponsored learning activities) to enhance their productivity and to stay competitive in a globalized world.

[…]

Regarding our *labor market and welfare state hypotheses*, we also test three different characteristics. The macro-economic context, measured via the unemployment rate, only influences participation in non-formal employer-sponsored learning activities. The higher the unemployment rate is, the lower the probability of attending non-formal employer-sponsored adult learning. This finding suggests that individuals and particularly employers are more likely to invest in adult learning in times of economic recovery, probably because by this time they have the necessary monetary resources […][10].

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CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ROLES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Balázs Németh

This chapter will examine and briefly analyse the roles of some of the major international inter-governmental (IGO) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) engaged in the development of adult learning and education. A comparative approach will be used in order to demonstrate their respective positions, and functions they represent in the international arena of adult learning and education. Finally, this chapter will discuss a number of drivers which, on the one hand, support the promotion of international collaborations in adult and lifelong learning and, on the other, those which contribute to barriers and restrain partnership building amongst providers of adult learning and education.

1. The changing functions of international organisations in adult learning and education

In an uncertain international environment for nation states, education remains a key policy tool for social integration, individual mobility and the recognition of identities. Moreover, international cooperation has pushed adult learning and education to the fore, in an attempt to find more effective responses to challenges to literacy, participation and performance in adult learners. In such an environment, the importance of international organisations – both IGOs and INGOs – in the field of adult learning and education is manifest. Today, the roles and functions of international organisations reflect the expanding scope of the field – bridging many kinds of adult learning from formal, to non-formal and informal models (Saar, Ure and Desjardins 2013). As discussed in Chapter 2, the birth of the United Nations, based on the collaboration of nations of the world, together with its thematic organisations, established a democratic orientation of nation–states to declare and demonstrate a universal right to be educated regardless of age, sex, social status, employment and nationality.

The traditional drive of international organisations in adult education after World War II was to increase the education of adults – pre-

dominantly in terms of 'second chance' opportunities – and to accelerate non-formal and informal community-based and individual learning. This welfare-oriented approach fostered a strong social and political recognition of adult education until the 1970s and beyond (Gelpi 1985). Increasingly, however, emerging economic and political challenges altered the societal focus and heralded a rather individualised and economic-centred focus of adult education: emphasising partnership with industrial and market stakeholders. This trend coincided with the emergence of economy-led organisations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). At a European level, the impact of the European Economic Community framed a rather vocationally focused vision, though some traditionally school-based and learner-centred approaches were adopted by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) and particular INGOs, like the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), throughout the 1970s. At a theoretical level, this period was also turbulent: critical thinking, comparative approaches, action research and analytical surveys were all employed to understand adult learning from grassroots formations and, at the same time, to react to changing policies of education and training (Jarvis and Pöggeler 1990).

The evolution of international organisations in adult learning and education reflect the fact that the majority of organisations focused mostly on more formal aspects of education and paid little attention to individual learners until the middle of the 1980s and early 1990s. Arguably, the (re)emergence of lifelong learning helped reposition adult education in the space between social and economic focuses, and between formal and non-formal settings. Issues to emerge included, for example, professionalisation, effective methodologies in teaching and learning, financing adult learning and education, the identification of the learning needs of special groups in society, social inclusion and active citizenship, the growing role of higher education.

It took until the 1990s for most international organisations in adult learning and education to revisit their traditional activities in order to reconfigure them to help reform provision of adult education and improve the quality of learning for adults (de Castro, Sancho and Guimaráes 2006). Even the newly formed European Union formed a policy track around education and training by increasing their focus on adult and lifelong learning.

Consequently, it is important to come to an understanding of the difference in functions (and values) of international organisations in relation to adult learning and education depending on their constitutional position as either IGOs or INGOs. There is also a third type, when an organisation may take an additional complementary function attached

to its main role(s) so as to research and/or develop adult learning and education through international activities such as humanitarian and development work (Duke 1996). In this respect, it is worth examining and comparing the key activities of some of the major international organisations according to the group to which they belong and the primary focus of their activities. In the next section five main activities are discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the ways in which these activities map on to the three categories of international organisations.

2. Key activities of international organisations in adult learning and education

At this point, we will describe the five particular types of activities through which international organisations in adult learning and education try to promote participation and performance.

2.1 Exchange of information

Exchange of information became an important part of international adult education activities in the 1960s, in which period UNESCO first demonstrated the need for comparative data and surveys in order to improve participation and, simultaneously, to underline further support measures for development. This focus still plays an important role, as other organisations such as the OECD have subsequently come to appreciate. Today, the exchange of information is more dedicated to specific areas of adult education in accordance with UNESCO's International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), and the same organisation's *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) measures, but one has to recognise that it depends on governmental input and engagement as much as on the complementary focuses and critical approaches of non-governmental groups.

In the last five decades, exchange of information has developed and extended to enhance the use of advanced technologies both in the workplace and in community activities. Throughout the same period, most international organisations have demonstrated their importance through the information they have collected, structured and distributed in order to underline their policy orientations with regard to adult learning and education. Moreover, many international organisations have also recognised adult education as an important component of social and economic prosperity and social welfare. However, one can still group those emblematic organisations according to their primary focus, the basic principles they represent, and their relations to governmental interests (Duke 1996).

Recent structures of information and data collection offer new opportunities for democratic engagement. The question which arises,

however, concerns how information is gathered and in what forms it is compiled in order to support international efforts to make adult learning and education open to the public by addressing local and global challenges. The positions and needs of international organisations dictate how they recognise the roles and functions of adult learning and education and in what ways they may want to emphasise the exchange of information. The OECD, for example, collects and shares information on adult learning in the Programme for International Assessment of Adults' Skills (PIAAC) survey to explain how trends in the quality of performance of adult learners influence their societies and economies (Rubenson 2015).

2.2 Research

International organisations in adult learning and education have played an important role in gaining recognition for the field as a legitimate area of action (UNESCO 2008). Moreover, both IGOs and INGOs have come to an understanding that research and innovation are valuable tools to convince decision-makers and stakeholders in education and training to keep financing and promoting adult education. On the one hand, there are some international organisations, which are rather humanistic and society-driven in orientation, for whom adult learning and education is a complex field of research without preferences towards either component. On the other hand, economy-, industry-, and services-oriented organisations view research as more focused, prioritising individual learners and their performance in learning. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that UNESCO is the United Nations' flagship IGO to demonstrate a community-centred, integrated approach to underline the necessity for developing access to lifelong learning, whereas the OECD is the primary platform for a rather individualistic and learner-centred focus.

There is another aspect one should not overlook: research work has adopted the use of comparative measures in order to record similarities and differences amongst similar geographical units, structures, organisations and institutions, groups of adults – leading to specific ideas, conclusions, messages and measures. This approach has also generated opposite views which question the scientific values and quality of comparative studies and analytical works in the field of adult education and learning (Duke 1996).

Finally, one has to remember that research had been predominantly focused on adult *education* for decades. It was the effect of IGOs from the economic world that first oriented attention towards adult learners on a lifelong learning track in the 1970s. This resulted in influencing research works of all IGOs' and INGOs' and their visions in the following two decades towards attaining quality and better performance. Even UNESCO indicated at the 1997 CONFINTEA V that learning was a key to the 21st century (UNESCO 1997).

Adult *learners* became important for two reasons. One was the rise of market dominated approaches to education which was led by economic organisations like the OECD, the World Bank and so on. The other reason was the emergence of critical pedagogies which emphasised attention towards learners instead of institutions and curricula. This shift resulted in the emergence of lifelong learning orientations to replace lifelong education during the closing decades of the twentieth century (Németh 2003).

2.3 Lobbying

Adult learning and education has never been easy to defend in international terms. International organisations in this field have to articulate and demonstrate the contribution of adult learning and education to social, economic and environmental sustainability. However, the concern of IGOs tends to be rather limited – directing their lobbying activities to focus attention on areas of action and issues that have been negotiated and that have been selected for improvement; for example, areas represented by UNESCO's *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UNESCO 2009a and 2013c).

The lobbying activities of INGOs are wider and more flexible since they are not tied to political and governmental limitations and barriers. Their difficulties in lobbying for adult learning are generally constrained by financial capacities and manpower. One has to recognise that the lobbying activities of INGOs are mostly oriented to convincing governments and their IGOs to pay more attention to adult learning and education and to induce them to provide enough resources and political support for a wider, more humanistic approach by supporting bottom–up policy formations and more locally advocated formations in educational settings. Another goal of INGOs' lobbying is to widen educational and training policies to improve those learning capacities and adults skills necessary to help realise sustainable development both in social and environmental dimensions (United Nations 2015).

Generally, UNESCO's CONFINTEA series, global and regional conferences and campaigns of the ICAE and of the European Association of the Education of Adults (EAEA), and the OECD's surveys can be understood and recognised as special forms of lobbying in which research and development work play a significant role in making the lobbying more effective. Lobbying may mean, firstly, fighting for more financial support for a certain field and, secondly, orienting greater attention towards a field. In this respect, adult learning and education is relatively weakly placed internationally. UNESCO's publication in 2016 of an updated *3rd Global report on Adult Learning and Education* promised to promote development of the field. However, most governments did

not highlight a special or even a growing role for adult learning and education during the latest World Educational Forum in Incheon, South Korea in 2015 (UNESCO 2015).

Today, one of the most important lobbying challenges is to elevate adult learning and education to a position where it is recognised as a key element in education and training policies, and to foster open debates around issues of formal and non-formal adult learning as tools in the fight against illiteracy and, for example, addressing early school leaving among young adults in global, regional and local terms. The forms and goals of lobbying need to be reconsidered by IGOs and INGOs so as to strengthen their position in educational debates, policy programmes, initiatives and, also, in academically led research and development orientations.

2.4 Professional development

International organisations in adult learning and education are generally concerned with enhancing and promoting quality adult learning through professionally designed, planned and organised adult education. Such an orientation is generally represented by particular programmes of international organisations (see details in Table 2 describing major activities of relevant IGOs and INGOs). These programmes may include conferences, seminars, workshops, training, summer and winter schools, short term academies and international camps.

On the one hand, such international events help direct social and political, and, moreover, professional and academic attention to the field of adult learning. On the other hand, they strengthen the morale of professionals and practitioners by collecting and sharing good practices and methodologies concerned with raising participation and performance in adult leaning with more comparative approaches. Professional development is an area where one can find strong involvement by higher education institutions through quality research, innovation and development work. This is generally funded by IGOs, usually collaborating with INGOs and their member organisations and institution. Universities, together with other key stakeholders, have recently recognised the impact of adult learning and education on local and regional development. Therefore, they emphasise professional development to support skills development, employability, social cohesion and sustainable social and environmental engagement in local and regional contexts which inevitably determine global potentials.

Professional development in adult learning and education is represented by relevant IGOs and INGOs so as to connect this area to other forms of education and training, like public education, vocational and technical education and training, higher education and new forms of distance education and e-learning. At the same time professional development helps

in building bridges between adult education and quality dimensions of labour, culture, arts and design, health, sports and leisure, youth and ageing, agriculture and industries, and religion and spiritual life. International organisations, however, have different goals, and focus upon the roles of professional development in adult learning and education. For this reason, one should be concerned to avoid misunderstandings, conflicts and to be open to inclusive and collaborative actions and viewpoints.

2.5 Aid

In the context of adult learning and education, aid work has always been important. However, it has changed dramatically and become more complex in the last thirty years. It was through the development programmes of United Nations' initiatives in the 1960s that international aid work started to include the improvement of the educational systems of the underdeveloped world, incorporating literacy campaigns, second chance programmes and health education initiatives (Stephens 1988). Amongst other significant UN organisations such as WHO, FAO and UNICEF, UNESCO joined in UN aid work and campaigning fifteen years after World War II, when economic conditions and welfare policies allowed some leading countries in the UN to launch development and aid programmes. CONFINTEA II in Montreal clearly signalled in 1960 that UNESCO would move in that direction and this movement began when UNESCO joined in the UN literacy campaign in 1965, targeting underdeveloped regions. The bipolar world and dependency relations made it difficult.

This traditional international orientation in development and aid was very strongly and adversely affected by the economic crisis(es) of the 1970s. This decade heralded the introduction of new approaches towards non-formal, vocational education with increasing focus on the labour-market and employment and skills, re-orienting aid work and development programmes towards economic interests and growth. The OECD and the World Bank, for example, both clearly signalled this change in orientation (Schuller 2009). 1972 and 1973 were years of change in this respect when most governments in the Western world started to modify their focuses on adult education – from Finland to West Germany, the UK and Ireland – and moved from traditional, school-based approaches to non-formal, dominantly labour-market orientations. There was an increase in programmes and plans to foster the employability of adult learners with flexible training by making use of modular structures in curricula, ICT, distance education, open learning approaches, and so on.

On the other hand, the landmark 1976 UNESCO *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* called for international collaboration to provide the necessary aid for raising living conditions and promoting

literacy and democratic values, and combined donations with special educational and training programmes (UNESCO 1976). One might think that it has always been a UNESCO-led work to provide aid through adult education for adult learners and their communities in need. But while UNESCO has played a crucial role, this process has also been supported by several member states, non-governmental civil society groups and platforms in helping people to improve their competencies and skills in order to make, keep, transform or save their communities through life-long learning and education. This process was also followed by the rise of critical pedagogies and community development initiatives by thinkers; for example, Illich and Freire (English and Mayo 2012).

It became increasingly evident that aid work basically meant financial donations, equipment, the development or deployment of physical infrastructure, and direct support of educational policies of partner countries. In the last forty years, international aid has been used predominantly to support collaborative actions, development programmes with capacity and team building, organisational development, networking, support to local and regional innovations and partnerships with other sectors of education in accordance with stakeholders needs. Recently, international aid has served to help promote initiatives of countries and regions in need to avoid providing marginally important goals. Moreover, concentrated actions as part of aid programmes directly help particular target groups of adult education which have been identified by inter-governmental organisations.

Finally, international aid work and the focus on special groups in need have been hit very severely by the lack of consensus and rivalries among countries of donor regions in the northern hemisphere. Another complicating factor is that some countries with colonial pasts prefer to support their former colonies. Some smaller countries, on the other hand, have tried to use adult education to promote partnerships for peace, cultural collaboration, youth work, raising employment, environmental protection, and other challenging topics. However, tensions, misunderstandings and conflict among international actors may still make it difficult to build a valid and proactive international coalition to make use of adult learning and education as part of aid work. Opposing examples include: the President of the USA Barack Obama hailing the Nordic traditions of non-formal adult learning; and German President Joachim Gauck stressing the impact of German Volkshochschule in developing an open and democratic society and critical thinking in Germany in the last one-hundred and fifty years (Obama 2016; Gauck 2016). Yet one should also not overlook a negative example of poorly implemented aid-work and poorly directed aid: migration from the Middle East and from Central Africa is, partially, a consequence of very imperfect and impotent international aid programmes failing to reach the right people at the right time.

Therefore, it is time that European collaboration amongst EU member states and UN-led development programmes were initiated so as to promote democratisation, open societies, critical thinking, exchanges and innovative actions to improve schools, VET and higher education institutions. Such actions could integrate and make use of the wider benefits of non-formal adult education: this has been promulgated by the European Parliament, the European Commission and civil society platforms, such as the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). Adult education could be an appropriate tool to bridge skills and competence development both in employment and in citizenship development dimensions.

3. New horizons for international actions – networking and advocacy

In the last thirty years, networking and advocacy have become essential elements of international activities in adult learning and education as represented by IGOs and INGOs. However, this new horizon has been increasingly evident in the last two decades in the work of INGOs, while IGOs have de-prioritised adult learning and education; and those orientations have moved their international partnerships and networking in specific directions which do not necessarily employ bottom-up approaches and local-regional claims.

But in pointing out the changing face and climate of international work in adult learning and education, we should not ignore the global changes in politics which are moving the world into a multipolar system, as well as issues related to demographic challenges and climate change. Meanwhile, migration, poverty, unemployment, and an inadequate system of education will soon create skills shortages and skills mismatches. In response to all of this, the UN have outlined Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the last two decades, networking and advocacy work have, therefore, turned to signalling the need to maintain a humanistic and universal-values orientation in adult learning and education. This position has been represented by such INGOs as the EAEA and the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub. Both of these organisations will be among those discussed in the next section.

4. Relevant intergovernmental organisations' (IGOs) roles in adult learning and education

Some distinguished intergovernmental organisations have different roles in and approaches to international activities in adult learning and education. We compare the activities of UNESCO, the OECD, the EU, the World Bank and, finally, the ILO.

4.1 UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNESCO is probably the most influential and most committed IGO in promoting global partnership and collaborative actions in adult learning and education based on its principles and on the claims of its member states. Milana (2013) underlined that UNESCO's commitment to adult learning and education has been well articulated through its series of world conferences since 1949. The spread of claims for human rights and inclusiveness from some developed countries and many developing ones has turned UNESCO towards some particular areas of adult education over the last four decades. The 1976 *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* clearly outlined a common policy frame by identifying comprehensive perspectives and key issues for adult education (UNESCO 1976). Only the declarations from UNESCO's International Conferences on Adult Education and the 1997 *Agenda for the Future* ranked as playing a similarly distinctive role in shaping an engaged policy orientation and contributing to growing international commitment and engagement.

It is, therefore, essential to structure the main roles of UNESCO, in policy context, with regard to the development of adult education. The organisation has the following policy roles:

- a normative role through specific documents (Recommendations, Calls, Protocols, and publications) which articulate the organisation's vision and outline common actions for its member states to place adult education in the forefront of their educational policies. This role has been labelled as ideational to reflect UNESCO's influence on educational policies and on the generation of an expanded view of education to emphasise incorporate non–formal and informal learning (Elfert 2013).
- a role in awareness raising through distinctive international conferences in adult education (CONFINTEA) and its follow-up work, and in calling attention to literacy and participation issues worldwide by particular framework programmes and initiatives (e.g. Education for All, the Dakar Framework for Action).
- a role in the promotion of intellectual co-operation, channelled via various conferences, seminars and other 'supranational dialogues' through UNESCO institutes, especially the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. The goal of such co-operation is to understand and to critically respond to various issues influencing the learning and education of adults. Also, this element underlines the need for quality work in adult learning and education, demonstrated by the medium–term plans of UNESCO, by pointing out essential criteria and responsibilities to support better performance in teaching and learning,

the impact of literacy challenges, and of the re-emergence of social exclusion and xenophobia in many parts of the world.
• finally, a role in technical co-operation and services via expert missions (e.g. world literacy initiatives), financial support, research studies, pilot actions, gathering data and aid to collecting statistical data on literacy, monitoring, training of trainers, developing exchange networks, collaborating with NGOs and so on.

Since UNESCO has such specific roles in the field of adult education which have been formed over six decades, it must be emphasised that policy formation is generally constrained by the limitations of the organisation being an inter-governmental body and, thereby, influenced by the coalitions, fragmentation and, in certain cases, compromises by its member states (Milana 2013). Likewise, UNESCO has no right to implement actions in relation to its policy roles on its own, but must arrive at consensual agreements with its member states on each and all initiatives. On the other hand, policy formation is made in relation to those roles described above which enable the organisation to develop adult education by making use of each and all of those policy roles. Singh describes UNESCO as a particularly complex organisation in the formation of educational policy and he pointed out the complexities and controversies of policy formation within and around the organisation (Singh 2011). International trends in identities, cultures, ethics and ideals strongly influence the making of educational policy, which may be implemented in the member states at different levels, in various forms, and through several other policy instruments. The operation of the organisation enables a rather limited policy formation regarding those roles described above and, simultaneously, constrains effective, efficient and collaborative work of distinctive UNESCO institutes, apart from the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, which are engaged in the development of some aspects of adult learning and education.

Policy development in adult learning and education is mainly formed by the Hamburg based UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) which has a long record in preparing and implementing policy tools in any of the fields of activity of UNESCO. In the meantime, any member state can initiate a concrete proposal that UNESCO and/or its institutes must pay attention to. The Office of the Director General (ODG) must take every proposal to the floor and have it debated upon a member state's request. Where the majority of member states supports an initiative, it will be signed out to the relevant UNESCO Institute to investigate it thoroughly and to report back to the ODG and General Assembly upon the impact of potentially implementing the proposal. UNESCO has recently been criticised for turning its back on humanistic approaches to adult learning and ceding too much ground to the

dominant economic labour-market orientation (Elfert 2013). They have been accused of over-emphasising the voice of the member states and suppressing non-governmental views – which, by contrast, are signalling the need for more concentrated action to be used in adult learning and education to fund the fight-back against illiteracy, to raise participation in second chance schooling and to handle the consequences of early school leaving.

On the other hand, it also has to be acknowledged that UNESCO, throughout the past six decades, has always represented a rather humanistic idealism which has inevitably had to confront reality and which has, in some cases, sacrificed much of its vision to the diverse interests of its member states and has been negatively impacted by economic crises, demographic trends, migrations, wars, social exclusion, famine, diseases, and so forth (Singh 2011). At the same time, policy formation in adult education today is very much constrained by the shift of most member states towards dominantly economic and, consequently, employment-oriented interests for short term benefits. In contrast to those, adult education policies generally do not offer easy routes to growth and development and still try to stay community- and learner-centred instead of growth- and income-oriented.

The adult education policy dimension which UNESCO represents is basically focused today on more participation and improved performance by adult learners in organised adult education. Accordingly, it was clearly emphasised in the *Hamburg Declaration* and in the *Belém Framework for Action* right at the end of the last two UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V and VI) that the member states play a crucial role in the implementation of its goals and visions, namely, to put policy principles into action (UNESCO 1997, 2009b). In the last two decades, UNESCO has worked out several platforms and forums to get all necessary stakeholders together in countries and regions responsible for the promotion of adult education. This has recently helped the organisation to incorporate the Learning Cities initiative into its policy incentives so as to turn an economy-oriented model into a more community-focused structure.

This policy development was put into practice through several collaborative actions amongst adult education organisations, institutions, city councils and relevant stakeholder groups (UNESCO 2013a). However, the success of such action depends on local and regional factors related to economic, social, political and other structures. In this respect, we have to conclude that UNESCO has played the most significant role amongst those few IGOs engaged in adult learning and education. We consider its latest Recommendation as a cornerstone to call for wide collaboration in order to develop at the same time quality in adult education and to raise participation in adult learning (UNESCO 2016).

4.2 OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

The OECD, as an IGO, has formulated a specific role for itself in modern Adult Learning and Education. The economic organisation's role dates back to the 1970s when the emergence of the lifelong learning orientation was starting to be used – building on the concept of recurrent education – in order to indicate a special focus on individual learners, their individual responsibilities and their performance in learning (OECD 1973). The OECD has approached adult learning and education from dominantly economic policy positions so as to demonstrate a correlation between growth, productivity, social stability and performance in education and training systems where public spending and investments are relatively high. The OECD, therefore, promoted and favoured cost-benefit surveys to prove the social and economic returns of education and training whilst pointing out challenges, opportunities and barriers to educational developments in order to provide a realistic picture for national governments (Schuller, 2009). At the same time, one has to remark that the OECD approach has tended to be rather reductionist and economy-centred.

The OECD became more active again through the 1990s with the emergence of the lifelong learning paradigm amongst international IGOs and INGOs. The OECD published its important document *Lifelong Learning for All* (1996) in order to underline that its learner-centred focus would not change, while UNESCO kept on shifting with its EFA commitment (OECD 1996). Not at all surprisingly, the OECD made it clear that it would need to see concrete improvements in adult learning as it turned out that learning would inevitably have an effect on economic growth and development. Therefore, the organisation provided two detailed reports on how to improve the participation of low-skilled adults in economy: *Going Beyond Rhetoric* (OECD 2003) and *Promoting Adult Learning* (OECD 2005).

These documents clarified that the OECD would support governments in improving skills development; consequently, it carried out skills-surveys which governments started to actively support, especially after the economic crisis broke in 2007 and affected most countries by 2008. This was the decade when the OECD decided to launch its Programme for International Assessment of Adults' Skills (PIAAC) as the sister-project of the PISA survey series (OECD 2013). PIAAC results are incorporated into the biennial OECD *Education at a Glance* report.

The main units within the OECD dealing with adult learning are the Directorate for Education and Skills with a focus on Skills beyond Schools and, also, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). One may come to the conclusion that the OECD is active in the exchange of information, research and networking, but not very relevant

in professional development and in promoting aid work in adult learning and education. It is no wonder that its role has been critically analysed by Rubenson (2015), Schuller (2009) and other experts on policy analysis.

4.3 European Union

The European Union (EU) has a complex role as an international intergovernmental organisation in adult learning and education in both direct and indirect forms. It has various bodies which promote adult learning today, but its role has accelerated in the last forty years although, strictly speaking, it was the European Economic Community which covered the first twenty years from 1973 till 1993. This evolution enabled the Community to put education and training at the forefront of collaboration between member states in order to achieve better participation and performance. However, adult education was for a long time associated with further education and training in European discourse, and was under the influence of the OECD. It took a number of years and a slight change in European policies for the establishment of the EU in 1992 to introduce the first common programme in adult education which evolved into the Grundtvig Programme. This signalled the need for quality adult learning and education across Europe after 1999. Therefore, this perspective was embedded into the lifelong learning initiative and policy layer of the EU as represented by the Lisbon Declaration and the short lived Lisbon Programme right after the Millennium. This is elaborated by Lima and Guimaráes who demonstrate the evolution of a rather constrained policy structure which is integrated into the so-called Open Method of Coordination (Lima and Guimaráes 2011). In addition to the Grundtvig Programme which was incorporated into two funding periods under the Socrates II and Lifelong Learning programmes from 2000 to 2013, adult learning policy was framed by two European Commission communications from 2006 and 2007 (European Commission 2006 and 2007) and subsequently supported by the European Council's Resolution for a renewed European agenda for adult learning (European Council 2011) .

Today, programmes in adult learning are channelled into the Erasmus + programme and coordinated by the European Commission. The Commission takes an employment oriented approach to adult learning, emphasising skills development as in the *New Skills Agenda* (EC 2016). At the same time, the Commission also supports quality oriented development and research projects initiated by member states' stakeholder bodies to raise quality in adult learning and education through the Erasmus + Programme.

Moreover, there are several institutions and agencies which have specific roles in collecting and sharing information about adult learning and education, initiating comparative analysis about relevant activities in

the member states of the EU. For example, the Eurydice platform collects information and data on the formal and non-vocational education of adults in member states. It also publishes research taking comparative approaches to the study of, primarily, formal structures. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) has a special focus on vocational education and training activities for adults, providing data-collection, comparisons and publications in that domain. Likewise, the European Training Foundation (ETF) also has a specific vocational training orientation which, by using EU funds, focuses on raising employability in South and South-East Europe.

In 2014, the EC launched the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), which makes a valuable contribution by the gathering and sharing of information related to specific aspects of adult learning and education. It aims to influence developments in the field by trying to reflect on such issues as quality, methodology, monitoring, VPL/RPL, learning support, learning environment, etc. Adult learning professionals from member states, researchers and developers can blog on this site to collect and share valuable information on successful activities, programmes, conferences and research in adult learning and education (EPALE website). In conclusion, the European Union and its institutions have complex roles, including participating in exchanging information, promoting research, development and professional improvement, and providing financial support via EU programmes. And finally the EU stimulates networking between professionals in adult learning and education within its member states and other countries.

4.4 World Bank

The role of the World Bank in adult learning and education, as an IGO, is twofold. On the one hand, its aid and development programmes/projects have the aim of improving education and training for better employment, social cohesion, youth integration, etc. Secondly, it supports member countries' governments in demonstrating how they promote adult learning and education in their own contexts. Therefore, the World Bank operates a so-called Open Knowledge Repository (OKR) with country-specific information. The World Bank collaborates with other intergovernmental groups like the IMF, the OECD and the EU in constructing special aid and development programmes, projects for underdeveloped regions and countries in the Southern hemisphere.

4.5 ILO – International Labour Organisation

The ILO has a distinctive role in the development of adult learning and education since this IGO is mainly engaged in collecting data on

employment and the labour force with reference to the skilled work-
force and growth in partnership with other UN bodies, like UNESCO,
WHO, FAO and several other IGOs. One of the many themes on which
the ILO works is that of Skills, Knowledge and Employability, which
incorporates lifelong learning, skills development and employability, en-
compassing both young people and adults (ILO website). The ILO is also
involved in the collection and analysis of data, research and initiation of
development programmes within UN member states. Moreover, statisti-
cal data from the ILO is generally gathered by countries' Statistical Of-
fices, allowing it to be systemically configured into comparative tables.

5. Particular international non-governmental organisations' (INGOs) roles in adult learning and education

In their detailed paper, Hoff and Hickling-Hudson (2011) demon-
strate that INGOs are agents of social change, and they help to monitor
the implementation of UN goals and principles. Moreover, the role of
INGOs in adult learning and education is not only a trend within global
civil society and a potential force for social change, but, in a wider in-
ternational spectrum, they exist to call attention to such issues as social
exclusion and inclusion in adult education. It must also be stated that
INGOs working for adult learning and education in Europe are differ-
ent in scale and in focus from INGOs in other continents and regions.

5.1 EAEA – European Association for the Education of Adults

The EAEA is the strongest European non-governmental civil society
organisation dealing with adult learning and education with a particular
focus on advocacy activities, resource allocation, collection of informa-
tion, networking and the development of an international community
of adult learning professionals and adult education providers. EAEA has
around 140 members from over 40 countries and organises events that
demonstrate an up-to-date approach to challenges to adult learning and
education (EAEA 2016).
EAEA has recently declared that it parallels UNESCO in promoting
quality learning and education for adults, but, at the same time, it also
highlights the need for non-formal adult education and lifelong learn-
ing. It promotes the sharing of information amongst member organisa-
tions, generates project-based research work with distinguished partners
and disseminates good practices from all over Europe concerning adult
education and learning. One may conclude that EAEA does represent all
six potential activities of an international organisation actively engaged
in adult learning and education and that makes the EAEA a strong plat-

form for the development of the field. Another function of the EAEA is to gather updated information on changing structures of adult education in the EU and in some partner countries from Central Asia, the Middle East and South-East Europe.

5.2 ESREA – European Society for Research on the Education of Adults

ESREA is a Europe-wide society for researchers promoting quality adult learning and education across Europe through research working group activities, conferences, seminars and publications of the journal *RELA* and thematic books. ESREA has become a stronghold of the university-based research community. It has subdivided itself into eleven platforms representing key research themes in adult learning and education and printing key publications. ESREA collects and exchanges relevant information about research on adult learning and education on its website, and calls members and associates to attend conferences and seminars on particular themes reflecting major scientific, social, economic and/or cultural aspects of adult learning. (ESREA website).

5.3 ICAE – International Council for Adult Education

This INGO promotes the education of adults at a global level through its membership representing all five continents. Membership is drawn particularly from continental and regional associations representing adult education. For example, EAEA is one of the members. According to Tuckett (2013), ICAE's aim is to develop adult and lifelong learning in accordance with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially its goal on Quality Education. ICAE exchanges information on adult learning and education through its website, newsletter and its periodical, called *Convergence* (ICAE website). Another essential goal of ICAE is to demonstrate that adult education ought to be considered by governments as a key driver of economic growth, employability, skills development and of achieving better communities and enhancing social inclusion.

ICAE engages in substantial lobbying activity and engagement so as to induce other international organisations in education, either IGOs or INGOs, to recognise adult education as a significant part of the educational sector and an equal sub-sector with public education, higher education and vocational education. It has also worked hand in hand with UNESCO on goals like Education for All and now on SDGs. Hinzen (2013) provides a detailed summary of this collaboration. Finally, ICAE has huge networking potential through its membership and via activities like its conferences and the ICAE Academy of Lifelong Learning Advocacy (IALLA), of which six editions have taken place since 2004.

5.4 ISCAE – International Society for Comparative Adult Education

The ISCAE is an international non-governmental group of research-ers providing comparative studies and professional development, while they try to gather information on adult learning and education in or-der to analyse trends and issues in international contexts. This relatively small society has an intercontinental membership, and works to promote comparative studies in adult learning and education, particularly with regard to raising participation and performance. Its relation to higher education is clear-cut and demonstrates a key aspect of collaborative ac-tions in quality research in ALE.

5.5 eucen – European Universities Lifelong Learning Network

The most influential organisation in higher education institutions on adult and lifelong learning in Europe is eucen. eucen was established in the early 1990s to bring together universities across Europe engaged in continuing education, *Weiterbildung*, etc. This organisation provides a voice advocating for higher education to be given a clear role and responsibilities in providing quality learning and education for adults in formal, non-for-mal and informal structures in local and regional settings. The 25-year-old eucen operates as a network of universities today with a website demon-strating its activities in collecting information with links to social media, project activities, and references to participating members and partners, conferences and seminars and, finally, publications. eucen's recent focus is on promoting university lifelong learning and for lifelong learning in uni-versities and organisations to demonstrate social concern and sensitivity.

eucen has got a strong commitment to improving participation, quality and performance in adult learning. To this end, eucen engages in lobby-ing European political bodies and platforms, such as the EC, the Euro-pean Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Commission for Economic and Social Affairs. EAEA and eucen are working together to raise awareness of adult and lifelong learning at the Lifelong Learning Platform (formerly EUCIS LLL).

5.6 NVL – Nordic Volks-League/Nordic Network for Adult Learning

This Nordic Network is a relatively small but influential platform comprising organisations promoting non-vocational adult learning and education in the Nordic and Baltic countries. A special goal of NVL is to allow civil society groups working with adult learners to collect and share good practices, develop the professional skills of adult educators and trainers and, finally, to organise conferences and training events amongst partner organisations.

NVL lobbies for more attention and support for non–vocational adult learning; on the other hand, it does not provide research and aid work. A further component of its role is involvement in development programmes in countries within this Nordic alliance where they are needed in local and regional contexts. Also, NVL is a flagship platform for Nordic net-working for adult education groups, foundations and associations.

6. Organisations with a complementary role in the development of adult learning and education as international work

6.1 DVV International

This German organisation is a special unit of the German Folk–High-School Association (DVV), financed by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and private donors. DVV International is a very active and internationally well–respected actor in the field of adult education and development cooperation. DVV International has committed itself to supporting lifelong learning for more than 45 years. DVV International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for Youth and Adult Education.

DVV International cooperates with more than 200 civil society, gov-ernment and academic partners in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Country and regional offices build local and regional cooperation and ensure the quality and effectiveness of their action in their partner countries. The organisation focuses on literacy and basic education, vocational training, global and intercultural learn-ing, environmental education and sustainable development, migration and integration, refugee work, health education, conflict prevention and democracy education. DVV International also lobbies to draw govern-ments' attention towards bringing about development, stability, growth and understanding through adult learning and education. Also, the or-ganisation provides a great variety of quality programmes, training for adult educators through projects and, additionally, publishes two quality periodicals, *Adult Education and Development* and *International Perspectives of Adult Education* (DVV website).

6.2 ASEM LLL Hub – Asia-Europe Meeting Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning

ASEM LLL Hub is a platform for dialogue amongst leading European and Asian politicians, stakeholders and promoters of lifelong learning, adult learning researchers among them. The ASEM LLL Hub was estab-

lished in 2005 and is an official network of Asian and European higher education institutions. They work together to achieve excellence in comparative research on lifelong learning, to offer research-based education policy recommendation, and to develop mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. It also facilitates researcher and student mobility and exchange within and between the two world regions. The ASEM LLL Hub provides a platform for dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy makers in order to contribute to evidence-based educational reform and innovation. Its five research networks exchange knowledge, conduct comparative research and produce coordinated publications and reports. In parallel with five active research networks, the Hub has a Hub University Council composed of senior representatives from its partner universities (currently, 36 representatives from 36 universities in 28 ASEM countries) and a Hub Advisory Board that at present brings together 25 national ministries and 5 international organisations.

In cooperation with partner universities and ASEM governments, the ASEM LLL Hub together with its five research networks organises seminars and conferences, publishes books and disseminates information on its website. At ASEM LLL conferences, the research results are presented to the public, representatives of ASEM ministries and academic communities. The Hub also publishes a special journal called *ASEMagazine on Lifelong Learning* (ASEM LLL website).

6.3 USAID – United States Agency for International Development

This special federal government agency focuses and supports particular aid and provides development programmes in countries as partners of the US. The agency has supported several educational and training programmes for adults connected with health, technologies, agriculture, environmental protection, social inclusion, etc. predominantly in underdeveloped regions of the world (USAID website).

7. Conclusion

It is a challenging task today to compare the roles and functions of international organisations engaged in adult learning and education. But a study of the works of key IGOs and INGOs in the field reveals to us that international adult education today has specific issues to tackle. These include participation, legislation, financing, quality, policy, literacy, etc. These are clearly reflected by Milana (2015) in her global overview of adult education and learning policies.

The realities of nation-states' interests as represented by governments shape the frames and limitations of partnerships on the wider goals of

social inclusion and welfare in the context of adult leaning and education. International organisations, whether IGOs or INGOs, have had to accept nation-states' autonomy in the area of education. Consequently, international organisations aiming at promoting adult learning and education depend on the collaboration of governments to improve the participation and performance of adult learners through programmes, structures and institutions. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that Duke (2015) explains that 'development' as such in the context of adult learning and education is still controversial, tarnished by a history of cultural and economic colonialisation which is seen to persist in newer forms. And yet, international organisations have had substantial success in convincing governments that partnership-based actions and international programmes in adult learning and education will lead to societies which are more open, understanding, and curious, resulting in turn in better employment opportunities for adults and more social engagement in their communities.

Table 2 – International Organizations in ALE.

Type of international organisation engaged in ALE	Name	Orientation to ALE	Activity 1 Exchange of information	Activity 2 Research	Activity 3 Lobbying	Activity 4 Professional Development	Activity 5 Aid	Activity 6 other (partnership-building)
IGOs	UNESCO	generally humanistic; oriented to education and learning;	✓ website UIL website/ newsletter Publications	✓ projects	✓ through MDG/ SDG goals	✓ special trainings of UIL	✓	✓
	OECD	economy-centred;oriented to adult learning and performance;	✓ website Publications	✓ PIAAC	✓	✓		✓ inter-govt. activities, collaboration with stakeholder groups
	EU	balanced in between education and training; oriented to LLL						
	European Commission		✓ EPALE	✓ be funded under Erasmus+	✓	✓ be funded under Erasmus+		✓
	CEDEFOP	VET-oriented	✓ REFERNET	✓	✓	✓		
	EURYDICE	education-oriented database and publications	✓	✓		✓		
	ETF	VET-oriented	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	World Bank	economy centred			✓		✓	
	ILO	generally humanistic employment-centred	✓	✓	✓		✓ by supporting UN-led programmes	

	Organisation	Description	Publications	(RELA)		(IALLA)		
INGOs	ICAE	humanistic; oriented to education and learning	website Convergence	✓	✓	✓		✓
	EAEA	oriented to education and learning of adults	website/newsletter	✓	✓	✓		✓
	ESREA	research oriented	website	✓ RELA		✓		✓
	ISCAE	oriented to comparative research on adult education and learning	✓	✓		✓		
	EUCEN	Partner HEIs involved in development of quality and profession in ALE	website Newsletter	✓	✓	✓		✓
Third form of Organisation / Complementary Roles in ALE	NVL	A Nordic network for adult learning	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	DVV International	Engaged in international development work through ALE	website Publications/AED-IPE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	ASEM LLL	oriented to adult and lifelong learning	Website/ASEM Magazine	✓	✓	✓		✓
	USAid	Providing special devel. and aid programmes					✓	✓
	Churches	value centred	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Selected Readings

CHRIS DUKE (2015)
This paper demonstrates that the term development is still controversial, seen in the context of a history of cultural and economic colonialisation persisting in new forms. It means that small successes and big failures have an impact on international adult education, while the place of education and of lifelong learning in development remains fragile and confused.

The author, Chris Duke, has been working in higher education since 1961 as a professor and senior administrator in the UK and at universities in Australia and New Zealand. He is also a participatory action researcher in adult education for development and has published widely in adult education, higher education policy, management, organisational behaviour and lifelong learning.

Duke C. (2015), *Development: Global-Local – a Critical View*, in Gartenschlaeger U., Hirsch E. (eds.), *Adult education in an interconnected world: Cooperation in lifelong learning for sustainable development*, DVV International, Bonn, 238-246.

Can we learn to manage better with great uncertainty?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will soon be succeeded by a new cycle of Sustainable Development Goals, with Education for All (EFA) rolling into a new cycle of global development planning and politics. We find the context for 'development' meanwhile transformed in many ways, some good, some terrible. Short-termism has become a chronic curse of Western-style democracies, some over-influenced by mass print, broadcast and electronic media driven to sell rather than to enlighten or inform. An invisible global web of power-brokers is woven through all sectors of business, financial and political society, denying democratic transparency and destroying faith in democratic process. Change for the better is instead sought on the streets; but then creating a stable governance and development process is even harder. We do not know how far the social media will become the new educator and medium for constructive participatory action. Nor do we know how far it will replace traditional forms of schooling and adult education. This new world of development appears to carry seeds of 'old colonialism' for which no constructive and sustainable alternative has been found [...][1].

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[1] pp. 239-240.

Connecting globalisation with local commitment and action

An evident certainty is that big systems consistently fail. Leaders in faux democracies are not good at assessing achievement and telling the truth. The cost and scale of failure, and of unanticipated, unintended, often serious consequences, is overlooked or ignored. 'Global' means big complex forces, events, political planning and decisions, some with five to twenty year time horizons, many very short.

Global transformation triggered by modern computer-driven global financial transactions may take micro-seconds. We lack the human capacity to act for development at any such pace. lnstead, we try to manage complexity by using common criteria, rules and processes that deny diversity, the very lifeblood of human and larger ecosystems.

A further change since DVV lnternational and ASPBAE started collaborating is that the new religion of neo-liberalism grew up in the eighties and has triumphed almost universally. The wisdom of the market and the virtue of competitive acquisition are a paradigm challenged only by a minority of public intellectuals and more seriously by militant Islam. The development community tries to accommodate and work with or within this triumphant paradigm, but it affronts and negates what 'sustainable human development' values rest on. Neo-liberalism echoes long-disproven trickledown theories of early modernisation. This new 'fin-de-siecle' and 21st century world needs to discard much: not of what we believe and value, but of how we go about doing things […][2].

What are the new challenges?

One way of responding to this question is to say that it is a failure of governance to manage ourselves in new times. We cannot manage complex causality. Our tendency is to manage complexity by (a) standardising solutions and measures, thus ignoring the diversity of people and context. Understanding and working with local diversities is however essential for success. Secondly (b), we divide and compartmentalise life and tasks into units and departments with responsibility for problems which no one can solve alone.

Another less obvious and tangible difficulty is the failure to recognise in its full and profound sense the meaning and power of culture: people's ways of knowing, seeing and doing. This includes traditional locally embedded and contextualised understanding and wisdom. Allied to this, we trust new science-based knowledge executed as policy with the use of new technical capabilities to manipulate large data sets,

[2] p. 240.

thinking that these enable policies to be implemented successfully. This however ignores all we know about motivation, and denies the basis of active participatory democracy. People need to take part in deciding the future they want to achieve, in understanding the requirements for this, and in committing to doing what is necessary. Often called empowerment, this creates energy and frees up initiative to make things happen. People may then be able to work together locally (horizontally); and to be part of an informed system of governance from street and village community through to the global councils of the United Nations and other bodies (vertically).

Even without neo-colonial and classist attitudes, modern management practices this 'democratic two-way street', turning civil society organisations into bureaucracies and universities into Fordist production lines.

Another way of answering 'What are these new challenges?' is by reference to the real events and problems that require good governance to manage and resolve. Climate change is the most massive and stark, yet easiest to put aside because it is gradual, cumulative in the long term, and leaves it to future generations to solve or suffer. Meanwhile we focus on immediate worries that affect the next election. So far the drowning of small island communities affects only tiny numbers of remote people – an example of the highly disadvantaged whom development especially addresses. Other extreme weather events are explained as short-term cycle accidents. Ever since global warming came to be recognised, belief in the mythical working of the market to produce the best possible development outcome and to achieve the greatest good of the greatest number has dominated global narrative and popular media. Note the exhaustion of non-renewable resources; and new realisation and action by some governments of the need to control water and food supplies. We thus realise that neo-colonialism is alive and well; *Britannia rule the waves* becomes ownership of food-producing land and control of fresh water by China and others […][3].

Migration and other global challenges

[…] An explosive dimension of the interwoven problems for development and its unavoidably political context is migration within and between nations. The world's urban population now exceeds the rural; mega-cities and metro-city regions are growing inexorably. Many new environmental, social and logistical problems follow. Most of these can be successfully addressed only by long-term multi-sector planning and investment, and by committed local participatory as well as global and

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[3] pp. 241-242.

national political action. Commitment implies understanding, believing and knowing what to do. Here adult education, lifelong learning and new orders of development should meet up.

Migration with its both welcome and undesired economic impact, and the revival of inward-facing nationalism, xenophobia, sexism, racism and other divisive beliefs, is prominent among the consequences of neo-colonialism and market elevation over human development values. When there is no place for shared planning and investment for the future (no role for a strong state and other agents of government), the weakest are neglected. Then new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be even less successful than hard-fought MDGs. Again, education might be seen as the way to help people know what is in their shared long-term interest, whatever vote-buying politicians and circulation-hungry media tell them. The locale for such useful applied learning should be the street corner, village river bank, market square, pub or coffee house, as well as social media, not only the private clubs and dinner meetings of the elite, or the canteens and exercise yards of prisons […][4].

[…] This paper is called a critical review. What makes it 'critical'? Here are three pointers.

(1) Much of the precious volunteered and low-paid endeavour of civil society workers in globally networked bodies like ASPBAE (Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in the Asia South Pacific) goes into lobbying, representing, and policy-influencing. Cost and benefit are invisible, but even travel-light lobbying NGOs, especially (I)NGOs, need time and funds for communication and travel. Like it or not, many conferences, seminars and planning events need attending to influence effectively, and NGO income, however gained, is precarious. Another precious finite resource is time. (I)NGO leaders, like modern political leaders, easily lose touch with the grassroots realities which development is for. It may be tempting to generalise, deny uniqueness and diversity, and become irrelevant. ln this way, managing in the global setting can threaten the local, weakening the capacity to connect and empower the local within global policy-making […][5].

(2) This task of managing scarce resources amplifies the need to be clear about the most pressing, fast-changing priority learning needs in diverse development contexts. Educators need intelligence, strength and courage to facilitate while leading: not to romanticise whatever 'the client' (the village, neighbourhood or community) says; able to argue from a base of moral and sustainable purpose with both 'the local' and

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[4] p. 243.
[5] p. 244.

'the global'; perhaps irritate and lose friends in the process. An example of moral failure would be treating short-term technical/vocational education/training (VET) goals that government and communities want for immediate economic purpose as the *only* kind of adult education. Strong leadership precludes retreating into the company and special language of fellow development educators. It means living in that specialised world while being of the difficult 'real world' in all its vicious intransigence

(3) Adult educators occupying so many roles and beset by so many urgent tasks have two chronic challenges. One is to understand how communities and organisations as well as individuals learn; and to foster this as well as individual learning (whether in the classroom, via the Internet, on the job or in community action). The rich rhetoric of learning cities, etc., often lacks practical meaning; or it means just enabling more individuals there to learn as if alone.

The second is to cease using the words *education and learning* interchangeably. lf we want to argue for more resources for *adult education* – VET, civic education, skill updating, access to formal accredited study – let us say education. This requires certain human and other resources; argue for those. lf we mean learning, let us understand and support how local people and peoples do learn, and show their learning in changed behaviour. By saying *learning* (lifelong and life-wide) when we mean education, we deny the case for finance: lf we all learn everywhere all the time, why demand resources? By confusing the two, we also lose the real force of learning for regeneration and renewal that civil society and our organisations need to govern well and survive in an exciting but hazardous century [...][6].

Heribert Hinzen (2013)

In this article, Hinzen deals with the impact of the UN and UNESCO and their goals for the post-2015 era. Hinzen also highlights the potential use of lifelong learning in the efforts of international organisations to respond effectively to global challenges. The article is a profound reflection on the importance of collaborative action in gaining recognition for adult learning and education as a potential tool in realising sustainable development goals (SDGs) with reasonable educational development programmes.

Heribert Hinzen has been working with DVV International since 1977. He was also a vice-president of EAEA (European Association for

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[6] p. 245.

the Education of Adults) and ICAE (International Council of Adult Education). Hinzen's major research focus is the comparison of policy developments in adult learning and education.

Hinzen H. (2013), *Lifelong Learning for All – A Potential Global Goal for the Post-2015 Education and Development Agendas*, in *Post 2015* [Special issue], «Adult Education and Development», LXXX, 4-14.

As we entered into a new millennium amid fears of Y2K crashes (remember those, anyone?) the United Nations accomplished something quite spectacular. The organisation, heavily criticised both for its slow decision-processes and its inability to implement decisions, succeeded in compiling an ambitious plan to reach many of its fundamental goals. Obviously the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, were a result of much debate, and a compromise. Nevertheless, here was a concrete roadmap, with measurable objectives in eight areas. At the same time, back in 2000, we got the six Education for All goals.

MDG and EFA

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were a result of 193 member states meeting at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in New York, agreeing to achieve eight goals set towards reducing poverty, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, and improving primary education, gender equality, maternal health, environmental sustainability and partnership for development.

Education for All (EFA) was a result of 1,500 participants of the World Education Forum in Dakar agreeing on six goals covering early childhood, primary education, youth and skills, adult literacy and continuing education, gender equality, and improving quality[7].

The EFA agenda was a big step forward. It replaced the World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs of an earlier World Conference in Jomtien from 1990. EFA looked at education from a holistic perspective, the new vision wanted to cover the whole lifespan – long, deep and wide.

Being involved

The global Adult Education movement got involved in these processes early, and was thus going beyond CONFINTEA, the series of UNESCO World Conferences on Adult Education. ln 1990, just before

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[7] p. 4.

Jomtien, the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) held its World Assembly, also in Thailand. On a national level, DVV International played a strong advocacy role in the preparatory taskforce within Germany, and I was later invited to join the Government delegation that participated in Dakar. Since then, this journal has published special issues and numerous articles preparing for or reporting on EFA events and their outcomes in policy and practice on global, regional and national levels.

As a result, ICAE, DVV International and other members were invited to participate in important committees like the CONFINTEA VI Consultative Group, the UN Literacy Decade Experts, or the Editorials Board of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, which is published on a yearly basis. In 2012 the Monitoring Report was on Youth and Skills, and the next issue will be on Learning and Teaching for Development.

Two of our goals were approved as part of EFA in Dakar:

'(III) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

(IV) achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.'

Unfortunately, this wider EFA vision became limited to the second of the Millennium Development Goals which wanted to: 'Achieve universal primary education'. As a result only this aspect of the EFA agenda got any attention by most governments and development partners. It would be an important task to analyse the flow of development aid for education, and demonstrate how much – although not enough – there was for children and schools, and how little there has been for the continuing education and training needs of youth and adults[8].

The adult learning community has criticised the implementation of the MDGs and EFA goals for the narrow focus on primary schooling, and the way youth and adults and their learning and training needs have been ignored. This publication aims at setting the records straight, and to engage in the debate that has already started: What should happen after 2015? As the success of the Adult Education community in Dakar did not result in an equally successful implementation, it is time to take stock of what has been achieved and look at what should be done now.

Post 2015 debates

We see a diversity of processes, conferences, and websites on the world stage. They try to evaluate the outcomes so far, and start the de-

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[8] p. 5.

bate of what should follow. All in all it has become clear that most of the eight MDGs have not been reached in most of the countries of the global South, and will not be reached by 2015. The same can be said for the six EFA goals, where most indicators show much more is needed. At the same time we should celebrate and learn from the many successes as they can provide lessons to be learned for the next decade. Many of these successes are well presented in the yearly Global Monitoring Reports, which are full of such stories.

There are voices raised suggesting that we once again set global goals, but this time with national and/or context-specific targets with related indicators. The argument is that what is easy to reach in one country may be very difficult in another one. Even within countries there are often large differences between opportunities in urban and in rural areas, between richer and marginalised people, not to mention the ongoing inequality between female and male access. For the new MDGs, which may be named Sustainable Development Goals, there is a growing understanding of the interconnectedness of the different goals: Healthier people learn better, better educated youth and adults are less vulnerable.

The UN System Task Team on the post 2015 UN Development Agenda published what they called a 'thematic think piece' on 'Education and skills for inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2015'. The Task Team observe trends for education, and divide their findings into:
• The growth of information and its changing nature
• A shift away from teaching to an increased focus on learning
• Lifelong Learning: Beyond a classroom-centred paradigm of education
• Future learning: Blurring boundaries between learning, working and living
• Rising skills requirements and foundational skills
• Employability challenges: Facilitating transition from school to work
• Anticipating change. (UNESCO 2012)

It seems that despite a variety and diversity of views and arguments, there is a growing common understanding which in respect to the different agendas calls for:
• An education-specific agenda covering all aspects of schooling, training, and learning;
• that education must be everywhere in the implementation of the development agenda;

This common understanding can be seen in the many documents floating around. This trend works in our favour, but it needs to be reinforced. The post 2015 debate is in full swing, and if the March 2013 meeting in Dakar is any indication, the Adult Education community needs to step up its efforts if we are to influence future goals. Luckily, all of us are invited to join the discussion.

The Adult Education community has a lot of opportunities to participate in the discussion through the high number of meetings, websites, blogs and social media available. The discussion in the Asia Pacific region can serve as a positive example where the UNESCO Bangkok office has taken the lead to explore future perspectives together with experts through a series of meetings:

- May 2012: Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond – Shaping a new Vision of Education
- November 2012: What Education for the Future: Beyond 2015. Rethinking Learning in a Changing World
- March 2013: Education in the post 2015 Development Agenda. Regional Thematic Consultation in the Asia Pacific

Where are we now?

The debate reached a first global momentum with the UN Thematic Consultation on Education in the post 2015 development agenda. The meeting in Dakar, March 2013, came up with priorities towards: 'More focus on quality and how to measure it; on equity and access for hard-to-reach children; and wl1at should happen during the first 3 years of secondary school.' These priorities clearly show that the current flow of processes and debates around new EFA goals are once again dominated by schooling needs of children.

At the same time there is also a great step forward in the Summary of Outcomes where: 'Equitable quality lifelong education and learning for all' is proposed as an overarching education goal to realise the world we want. The Civil Society Communique of the Global Civil Society Forum on the post 2015 Development Agenda held in Bali in March 2013, came up with a statement that a future «framework must include goals and zero-targets on universal access to equitable healthcare, quality, inclusive education and Lifelong Learning, water and sanitation, and food and nutrition security»[9].

By engaging in these debates now, and deepening them through our journal, we hope to provide an increased opportunity to have an in-depth discussion of why 'Life· long Learning for All' would be an overarching aim that sets education as a human right as well as skills and competencies for citizenship, livelihoods, and vocational needs as an overall orientation.

It is not too late for the Adult Education community to get more deeply involved. Members of ICAE should do it at the national and regional level. The Adult Education community can strengthen its positions and claims through evidence-based policy recommendations coming from

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[9] p. 6.

good practice. All readers of this publication are invited to join the discussion in a virtual seminar organised for early 2014. Potential issues to be raised include:

- What are the alternative paradigms in and for education and development that transcend the limited orientation towards economic growth?
- How can education systems reach out to provide better access and more inclusive structures based on policy, legislation, and finance for all sub-sectors?
- How can civil society at the national, regional, and international level get better involved in these debates, and thus support the efforts by ICAE and others?

This involvement should cover both the education as well as the development agenda. Youth and adult learning and training must be strong components in both[10].

CONFINTEA and GRALE

The Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals are not the only processes that address education globally. We should not forget the CONFINTEA process.

The Belém Framework for Action which was approved at CONFINTEA VI in 2009 is monitored by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. A midterm report is due in 2015.

Belém saw the first Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). Once the new GRALE report is published, later in 2013, the Adult Education community will be in a position to know what has been achieved since Belém, and what policy and practice, support and partnerships it should concentrate on. This includes the greatly needed governance, professional and financial structures and mechanisms […][11].

LICINIO C. LIMA AND PAULA GUIMARÁES (2011)
Lima and Guimaráes' book on the evolution of adult education policy in Europe is a comprehensive analysis of policy making in education and training in the EU. The short excerpt below gives an insight into particular aspects of policy and policy making in education, especially in adult education.

Licinio C. Lima is a Professor of Sociology of Education and Educational Administration at the Department of Social Sciences of Edu-

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[10] pp. 6-7.
[11] p. 7.

cation University of Minho, Portugal. Various European and Brazilian universities have hosted him as guest professor. He is also the author of many academic works published in several countries, including more than ten monographs.

Paula Guimaráes received her PhD in Educational Sciences in 2011. She has been working as an Assistant Professor of the Institute of Education of the University of Lisbon since 2012. She lectures in and researches adult education. She was also the Vice-president of ESREA.

Lima L.C., Guimaráes P. (2011), *European Strategies in Lifelong Learning: A Critical Introduction*, Barbara Budrich, Leverkusen, 15-19.

Some basic concepts for education policy analysis

This book discusses ALE strategies in the European context. It also looks at education and training policies and even discusses policies that have been developed in non-European countries and regions.

This discussion is sustained by certain concepts that are set out and explained below.

Education policy, education politics and strategies of education.

The discussion of ALE policies involves several levels of analysis, including the debate on education policy, education politics, and strategies of education.

The function of conceiving, adopting, and assessing an educational policy was assumed by the welfare state as an essential domain of social policies. In this type of state, social policies are conceived as a regulation mode within the nation state and the interaction of democracy and capitalism, a link that was essential for the development of Western and capitalist countries after the Second World War. Education policies have allowed for the building of public education systems. These systems are based on formal education and training provided in schools and vocational training centres that are attended by children and young people before they enter the labour market. Formal education and training thus aims to prepare individuals for the labour market. Simultaneously, it intends to create citizens and make them active members of democratic societies.

It is in the context of this interaction that AE has become strategically important at work, and has seen its profile heightened in people's social and family life. As a result, this domain is now subject to intense political bar gaining between various actors in many countries, and it is at the centre of a number of social policies[12].

[…]

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[12] pp. 15-16.

Several works can be found on education policies, and these are called policy studies. Many authors have studied these themes in recent years. The definition of the limits of what can be achieved by an education policy, along with the preparation and implementation processes in the context of reconfiguring the nation state and globalisation, have attracted the interest of many researchers. Education politics and education strategies are often queried in their studies, as is the significance of the political options implemented.

It should be noted that some of these studies aim to lead to the creation of policies, for instance by containing recommendations for action or by supplying information and discussions that can inform the drafting of a policy. Other studies analyse existing policies in an effort to understand the processes that influence or determine their construction and their impact on society, or to acknowledge the values, presumptions, and principles that underlie a policy.

Traditionally, the main concern of education policy analysis has been public education systems. These systems organise the forms of provision that in many Western countries have been conceived as important mechanisms of social redistribution and social justice. The efficiency (or inefficiency) and the results of these systems, as well as the social inequalities they cause are important issues that have been approached by an extensive body of theory and research[13].

The welfare state, the neo-liberal state, and adult education policies

In order to understand the impact of education policies, it is important to consider the changes that have been occurring in the state since at least the Second World War. As mentioned earlier, the state cannot be seen in isolation: the economy, especially the development of the most important mode of production of a country and a region, such as capitalism in Western countries, as well as civil society, its nature and characteristics, are important features to consider. In fact the state both mediates the relationship between the economy and civil society and relates directly to each of these actors. […] in particular [the state] lays down key parameters (but again not the only parameters) of what is possible, for itself and for its relationship with economy and civil society. State institutional structures are a key means of translating and specifying the shape of economic, political and social problems.

Looking at the period from the Second World War until recent years, many authors agree that it is possible to identify two main forms assumed

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[13] p. 18.

by the state in Western capitalist countries. These are the welfare state and the neo liberal state […]¹⁴.

Marcela Milana (2015)
This introductory text gives an insight into the changing nature of policy issues in adult learning and education and provides some reflection on what matters of global concern may arise from those issues.

Marcela Milana is a distinguished researcher in policy developments and structures in adult learning and education referring to the behaviour of state, international organisations and that of social movements and justice. Milana is a professor at the School for Democracy at the University of Verona, Italy.

Milana M. (2015), *An Introduction: A Global Outlook on Adult Education and Learning Policies*, in Milana M., Nesbit T. (eds.), *Global Perspectives on Adult Education and Learning Policy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 1-15.

Adult education as a public policy matter

In one form or another, adult education has been practised for centuries worldwide. Hence national developments in this field are inherently entangled in wider social, political and cultural perspectives and the changes that have been experienced by individual countries and, in some cases, entire regions. This explains many of the similarities and diversities in pedagogical traditions that coexist within, and most evidently across, countries. However, as an object for public policy, adult education has a relatively shorter and, to some extent, more homogeneous history.

Throughout its history, adult education has principally been considered as the responsibility of national governments, and generally, although not exclusively, for its compensatory and remedial functions. In most countries, explicit governmental statements about the education of adults were developed in the nineteenth century, together with the institutionalization of public schooling for children. Yet throughout the twentieth century such statements have been expanded primarily as an instrument for tackling social problems in Western societies, and adult education has been strongly connected with the welfare state. This can be seen, for example, in the USA with Roosevelts New Deal, in the UK with the Beveridge Report, throughout Europe, Japan and New Zealand after the Second World War, and in most Latin American countries

¹⁴ p. 19.

with the shifts in social protection policies that followed the economic crisis of the 1980s.

Over time, this has led to broader separations between state understandings of adult education as either a purely social or a purely developmental policy. In transitional or less economically developed countries, adult education has also served as a step towards better social, cultural and economic development, albeit under the shadow of post-colonialist relations. In recent decades, however, things have changed with the development of the concept of 'lifelong learning' […][15].

In short, legislative frameworks and rationales at regional, national and local levels are an essential component of adult education provision and afford significant opportunities for it to flourish or wither […]. However, state rationales and law-making within national contexts are not the only conditions when considering the following questions: Who makes adult education policy? Where and how is public policy made? What are the influences and constraints upon it? What is it for? For instance, civil society in its diverse ramifications often compensates (either historically or geographically) for the absence of the state in educating young people and adults who are left behind by public education. In recent decades, international and worldwide organizations that operate at either inter-governmental or non-governmental levels have increased in number, visibility and capacity so as to contribute to policy development, thus making adult education policy into a global concern […][16].

Adult education as a global concern

Productive approaches to education policy analysis that look beyond and across national contexts consider how international governance frames education as a human right protected by various universal declarations or acts as a service provision that is subject to market policy. They also question to what extent these intersect and shed light on several issues: the role played by the EU as a pooling of sovereignty governmental relations with interstate organizations, such as the OECD or UNESCO; access to monetary loans by the World Bank; and the expansion of public-private partnerships in the management of public policy, including the management of more accessible and cost-effective education in low-income countries. Such analysis shows vividly that education as a public policy is influenced not only by nation states but also by those international organizations that contribute to shaping national responses to the needs of 'vulnerable' adults, especially at times of socioeconomic crisis.

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[15] p. 3.
[16] p. 5.

Capturing the implications of these various actors' involvement in national policy formation requires a fuller appreciation of the very working of governance. Governance is a familiar concept in the social sciences that has risen to prominence in the study of power and policy issues […][17].

It is no surprise then that a plethora of policy actors (albeit with different responsibilities and potentials to be heard) have been involved in UNESCO's planned revision of its *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* (UNESCO 1976), to date the only international normative statement in this area. However, this initiative has coupled with other political processes in the making with which a number of regional and global agendas for adult education intertwine and mingle, benefiting from enhanced cross-collaboration between governments and international organizations.

[…] Data on adults' skills that were gathered in 2008-2013 across 23 countries in Europe, Canada, the USA, Japan, Korea, Australia and the Russian Federation, which adhered to the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (OECD 2013), have provided fresh snapshots at individual and cross-country levels of the reservoirs and conditions of skills among the adult population. An additional nine countries from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Oceania and South America joined PIAAC's second round (2012-2016), and more countries are still under recruitment for its third round. Similar assessments, which were run in cooperation between Statistics Canada and the OECD (2005, 2000, 2011), have been the object of careful investigations into the policy implications for participating countries, the growing interconnectedness between measuring and assessing adult skills across national and international scales, the ways in which this type of performance measure legitimises national strategies, and the power of media coverage to strain the link between these measurements and governmental policies on adult education.

Growing concern about adult education and learning in both OECD and EU countries is not new. It was sparked more than two decades ago by the *Lifelong Learning for All* report (OECD 1996) and the proclamation of 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning. Accordingly, inter-country and interinstitutional collaborations in this field are not new either. Yet owing to the drawbacks of the 2008 global financial crisis, some regions of the world, such as Europe and North America, have seen an increase in unemployment rates among their populations […].

So what we note here is a growing interdependence between the organizations, and the governments that join either or both. Since 2011 the EU has adopted a series of measures to strengthen European gov-

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[17] pp. 5-6.

ernance through closer coordination and surveillance of its economic policies, which include crafting country-specific recommendations that are concerned with national budgetary and reform policies, among others, in education and employment. Only two years later the EU and the OECD agreed to 'join forces in three important aspects of education and skills development: Skills Strategies, Country Analyses and International Surveys' (EC 2013: 3). As a consequence, EU member states that participate in future rounds of the PIAAC can finance its costs through the Structural Funds, a financial tool to implement communitarian policies in member states […][18].

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GLOSSARY

ABE	adult basic education
AEL	adult education and learning
AES	Adult Education Survey
AFDECE	Association française d'éducation comparée et des échanges (French Association of Comparative Education and Exchanges)
AGE	adult general education
AHE	adult higher education
ALE	adult learning and education
ALS	adult learning systems
ALPINE	Adult Learning Professions in Europe
APR	Age Participation Rate
ASEM	Asia–Europe Meeting
ASEM Hub for LLL	Asia–Europe Meeting Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
AVE	adult vocational education
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CESE	Comparative Education Society in Europe
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
CoE	Council of Europe
COMPALL	Comparative Studies in Adult and Lifelong Learning
CONFINTEA	International Conference on Adult Education (UNESCO)
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
DIE	Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (German Institute of Adult Education)

DVV	Deutsche Volkshochschule Verband (German Association of Folk High Schools; German Adult Education Association)
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EC	European Commission
ECER	European Conference on Educational Research
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EFA	Education For All
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENLACES	Latin American and Caribbean Area for Higher Education
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
ESF	European Social Fund
ESPA	European Social Policy Analysis
ESRALE	European Study and Research in Adult Learning and Education
ESREA	European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
eucen	European University Continuing Education Network
EU–LAC	European Union – Latin and Caribbean Foundation
EUROSTAT	EU Statistics Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GNLC	Global Network of Learning Cities
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IALLA	ICAE Academy of Lifelong Learning Advocacy
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
ICT	information and communication technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ICUAE	International Congress of University Adult Education
IGO	intergovernmental organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	international non–governmental organization
ISCAE	International Society for Comparative Adult Education
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IT	information technology

LLL	literacy and lifelong learning
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NVL	Nordic Network for Adult Learning
ODG	Office of the Director General
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKR	Open Knowledge Repository
PC	personal computer
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSTRE	problem-solving in technologically rich environments
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SALM	Skills and Labour Market to Raise Youth Employment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TSER	Targeted Socio-Economic Research
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	vocational education and training
VPL	Valuation of Prior Learning
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WCCES	World Council of Comparative Education Societies: also hosts World Congress of Comparative Education Societies
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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