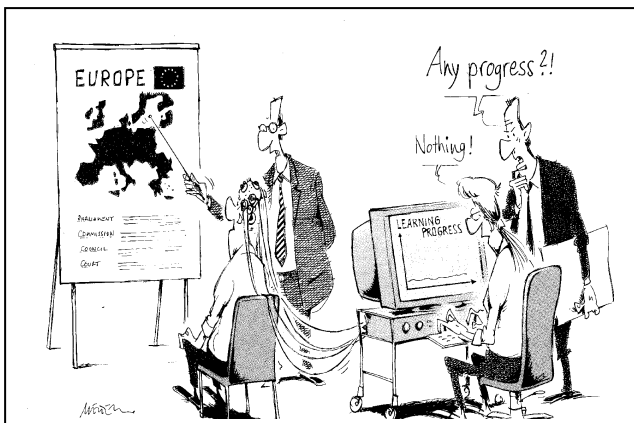


Focus: Science. Science and research in Europe is still carried out by individual countries. In adult education, direct cooperation and joint research plans or projects still tend to be the exception. Yet there have been some promising first steps, such as the "Adult Education Survey", which developed indicators for the standardised evaluation of participation in further education in the countries of Europe. In this InfoLetter we will also be presenting various interesting research results and concepts from individual countries of possible interest throughout Europe, as well as other topics related to the latest developments in European adult education.

Cartoon: Mester ▶



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European
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Grundtvig Project Adult Education

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KBE

Adult Learning is a Public Good

Europe. Interview (extract) with *Marta Ferreira*, head of unit Adult Learning, Grundtvig, DG Education and Culture, EU-Commission.

(Michael Sommer) 2006 the European Commission adopted its first Communication on Adult Learning: "It is never too late to learn", and one year later the first Action Plan on Adult learning: "It's always a good time to learn". What were the reasons for the Commission to move forward such an initiative?

The first Communication in 2006 provoked an intense discussion with and between the Member States regarding the situation of adult learning in each country and in Europe. Above all, in regional conferences a very positive spirit was created and it was shown that the countries, stakeholders and agencies are seeking orientation on this issue.

This has led to the Commission's first Action Plan on Adult Learning (APAL), of 2006, aimed at putting into action the general political vision of the Communication, and to achieve short- and mid-term concrete results.

What are the results and experiences concerning the new Action Plan and what are the next steps?

Institutionally, the Action Plan (APAL) gained lots of visibility. During 2007, it was subject of a large debate at the European Parliament: 3 Commissions of the EP approved reports on the Adult Learning Action Plan and finally, on 16 January 2008 the European Parliament has approved a resolution on Adult Learning, based on the report of MEP Doris Pack. Meanwhile, the Economic Social Committee (CESE), representative of Social partners, and the Committee of the Regions (RC), were consulted by the Commission for the Action Plan. After interesting consultations and debates, two respective reports were approved, on 21 February 2008 by the CESE and on 28 February 2008 by the RC. Europe understands that, in the knowledge society, Adult Learning provision and access are public goods. But the most important accomplishment foreseen, will be the next Council Conclusions on Adult Learning

(CCAL) to be adopted by the Council of Ministers in May 2008, if the Education ministers agree so.

The importance that Adult Education has now gained is also reflected in the fact that in the Commission, at the Education and Culture Directorate General, a specific Unit was created, started 1 October 2007, dealing with Adult Education policies, the Action Plan on Adult Learning Follow up and the Grundtvig programme.

A working group set-up of official representatives of the Member States, experts in the adult learning sector and social partners, was constituted and had its first meeting beginning of February 2008.

We are now currently establishing more networks, for example a network of researchers is envisaged. Networks such as InfoNet also can play an important role here, as dissemination actors.

What are your impressions on the development and approaches of the Grundtvig-Projects?

The Grundtvig programme has certainly gained a very specific importance in the area of Adult Education since the beginning of the year 2000. Many projects have picked up on problems at the micro and local level and have been able to solve them. But many of those trans-national projects contribute to answer to more macro-sector challenges.

We see in the applications what potential exists in Europe. The number and the quality of the applications have continuously improved over the last few years. In future, more attention needs to be dedicated to dissemination of the project results and providing best-practice examples.

The only problem of Grundtvig is, for the moment, the limited amount of funds.

Full version ▶



Marta Ferreira ▶

EUROPEAN
AFFAIRS

Helping immigrants integrate better into society must become a priority, says OECD Secretary-General

Europe. OECD governments need to do more to help immigrants integrate and make better use of their skills, according to OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría. ▶

Ten years of LLinE conferences

Europe. The title of the tenth LLinE conference was New partnerships and lifelong learning. More than 70 participants from all over Europe gathered in Finland to discuss and develop the concept. ▶

Winning immigrants as active members – WinAct

Projects. The WinAct training courses communicate adult educators ideas and approaches for the training of officials from trade unions and political parties who are interested to win immigrants as active members. The project aims at promoting active membership of immigrants. ▶

Science

Untapped potential

Denmark. For any business wanting to succeed, one crucial success factor stands out: systematic competence development for employees, combined with close cooperation with educational institutions regarding the development and organisation of work. This is a conclusion of a study analysing successful Nordic competence development projects for people with low education levels. ▶

Return to classic themes

Finland. Finnish research in adult education is strongly directed toward working life and learning on the job. Dr. Karin Filander, a member of the management team of the adult education research society, wants to add non-formal adult themes such as lifelong learning, multiculturalism, modern maturity and citizenship

(Sirku Määttä) Adult learning theory in Finland has strong traditions, and it is internationally active. The volumes of research have grown noticeably in a couple of decades. Simultaneously, the fields of activity in non-formal adult as a focus of it have fallen from their dominant position and become marginal.

Adult education is more societally oriented than pedagogy. According to Filander, it should be connected even more closely to critical sociology and the social sciences. Working life and on-the-job learning should not be the only important things.

“The rhetoric of adult learning theory stresses the economy and working life. It is time to challenge the experts in the subject and its practitioners to ask questions through which the significance of non-formal adult education can be justified,” states Filander, who is chief assistant of the school of social sciences and social pedagogy at the University of Kuopio and an assistant professor at the University of Tampere.

From social pedagogy to new learning

Seven universities in Finland have a professorship in adult education, and the students have the opportunity to major in adult education. Social pedagogy has been instituted as a new university degree program. “Social pedagogy is interested in informal and non-formal learning and in official spaces where individuals and groups can pursue education away from the job and from home,” Filander declares.

According to the researcher, the concepts of learning that research in adult education has adopted have become separated from the concrete, cultural and social interconnectedness of non-formal adult education. “Education began already in the 1960s, when the attempt was made to term popular education ‘adult education’ and in the 1970s the field was switched from social science to the education sciences,” Filander points out.

The new state of community

The researcher wants adult education to pay attention to social movements. “It is important to ask if non-formal adult education can produce new communalism, multicultural all-round education and citizenship.”

She does not want to restrict the design of non-formal adult education to middle-class and middle-aged women. “But men also need a vital work life and space to renew themselves alongside the support of the family, as do the unemployed, those being rehabilitated, the elderly and youth as well as whole families.”

Also the net community and net democracy should be the object of non-formal adult education, on the model of youth work.

The researcher’s dream job

Having been a teacher in a public college and an assistant principal, Filander’s own research program would cling to basic values such as freedom, culture, education and work. “A return to classic themes would be a good thing. The Bildung discussion that is part of German tradition should be spiced with historical borrowings.”

In the research program, one would start with expanding the consciousness of humanity and human value by reading literature. Topics of discussion would include identity, sex, the postmodern community and a re-evaluation of work. The Finnish cultural heritage, civic community and multiculturalism would be examined.

“We would build new visions of a pleasant and productive adulthood and old age, into which would fit more than just work and consumption,” Karin Filander imagines. ▶

ESREA: A European forum for research

Europe. Since 1991 scientists specialising in adult education have been using the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults as a platform for exchanging information – with increasing success.

“Interest is growing slowly but surely!” Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Jütte from the Danube University, Krems in Austria is member of the steering committee of the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA). The individual countries are still very isolated in the field of research, but a lot has been achieved since ESREA was founded in 1991. The society has created a platform where scientists involved in research on adult education in Europe can exchange their most important research methods and results. Attendance at its conferences is also increasing and, he says, there is a growing willingness to cooperate. Jütte, whose research concentrates on international cooperation and network formation, sees the society’s recent efforts to appeal more to students as a particularly encouraging sign. So far a total of 41 institutions and 52 individual members have joined ESREA.

ESREA basically consists of theme-based networks, which focus on specific areas. There are currently seven networks, which are of relevance in the European context and are therefore appropriate for discussion at ESREA: Access to Learning / Learning careers, Active Democratic Citizenship, Working Life and Learning, History of European Adult Education, Gender, Life History and Biography, as well as global and local learning. The sub-groups regularly convene meetings, where the latest data and research results are presented and discussed. Their principal themes, according to Jütte, tend to focus on topical issues in the participating countries. The “Active Democratic Citizenship” sub-network is quite heavily subscribed by the new accession countries ... ▶

Is Polish Andragogics a science?

Poland. *Asking whether andragogics is a science requires the assumption that social sciences differ qualitatively from natural sciences because of the subject of their research. The most obvious difference is the fact that social science subjects are characterised by self-awareness and they are able to include reflection about one's situation and relationships. Andragogic reflection belongs to this current of scientific thinking. Mięczysław Malewski proposes that it be included in a group of educational sciences. It would then belong to the field of social sciences and be given equal status with educational sociology, developmental psychology, economics of education, history of education and pedagogy.*

(Wit Pasierbek, Anna Walulik) The social and political changes that occurred in Poland after 1989 and which created a new type of social rationality, have also established qualitatively new external development conditions for andragogics which, until recently, was dominated by a neopositivist methodological doctrine. Andragogic research also included such fields as self-directed learning, self-directed education, workers' training, cultural and educational activities, industrial and agricultural activities and social and political activities. This resulted from a rational research strategy which requires a choice of the most urgent issues from the point of view of social needs. Adult education could only be found in institutions created, financed and controlled by the state. All research concentrated on problems connected with the effectiveness of adult education. This means that andragogics found itself in an ideological trap. Andragogic research activities were regulated by questions regarding the modernity of the programmes and text books for adults and whether or not they prepared the students for specific social roles and about the motives for participation and their ability to stimulate. Non-formal and informal learning, the most typical type was ignored.

A significant feature of Polish andragogics during the Communist period was an empirical reference point. Frequently research was based on the simplest analyses of factographic material obtained from statistical data. It was conducted in conditions devoid of any real technical support by individual researchers or small teams. Educational methods were used as the theoretical basis, frequently referred to as adult pedagogics. In this way andragogics acquired the status of a sub-discipline, thus increasing the distance dividing it from sociology, psychology or philosophy.

After 1989, the disbanding of the centralised state interest in adult education made it possible to base research procedures on understanding and interpretation by using qualitative research. Its point of departure became social reality in a form which people impart on it. This inclines andragogists to present research problems and seek interdisciplinary answers. At the same time, this requires a new definition of how andragogics is related to other sociological science disciplines and rejection of the conviction that all that is expected is knowledge directly serving educational practices. Shifting research emphasis from educa-

tional practice to a cognitive one, sometimes seems difficult. It appears that this results not just for a need for new thinking about andragogics as a science, but also from the situation in which adult education finds itself in the new socio-political reality. This may be why Józef Półturzycki's call for research priorities in Polish andragogics, lists the following:

- Local labour markets and their educational needs, eg, to stimulate the economic, social and cultural development, promoting local community activities to create jobs, encouraging enterprise and taking advantage of regional traditions and resources.

- Specific social communities and their educational needs, eg, people of the third age, the handicapped, women, the army, sanatorium and hospital and care home patients, etc.

- New educational interests, eg, one's own health and life, family contacts and relations, religious beliefs, new technologies and their use in everyday life, sexual contacts, natural environment, etc.

- How state and non-state adult education institutions function on all levels, particularly schools and widely available courses from the point of view of their social usefulness, meeting teaching requirements, observance of legal guidelines, etc.

- Non school centered forms of adult education linked to cultural, union, political, religious, social and tourist activities, etc.

- Training and development of specialist andragogists associated with working out a qualification model for teacher-andragogists, andragogics-promoter, andragogics organiser and preparation of a training programme for their training and development as part of their professional work.

- Specificity of educational methods in working with adults and their suitability in particular circumstances, teaching effectiveness auto reactive values and their role in self-directed education and others.

- The role of information in adult education and its organisational, inspirational, innovative and popularising significance.

- Links and contacts of research with andragogic practice on different rungs of its functional work, the role of university and college centres and other research centres on the activities of practicing andragogs, research collaboration, common research projects, help with working out methodology and organisation, diagnostic work, etc.

- Development of andragogic theory and practice and promulgation in decision making circles among the practitioners. ▶

Scientific Education in Hungary a Big Success

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Magyar Telekom and T-Online founded ENCOMPASS (Mindentudás Egyeteme) in 2002, with the aim of reviving Hungary's high standards of scientific education and raising the profile of leading national scientists. The scientific course operates through a combination of online components and collaboration with television and radio networks, as well as newspapers. ... ▶

Studying adult education in Serbia – A Procrustean bed or an opportunity?

Serbia. As in many other Eastern European countries, all adult education issues in Serbia have been studied under the scientific conception of andragogy for almost 30 years. ▶

Adult learner types

Germany. Adults learn differently. For teachers in adult education, it is therefore difficult to focus on individual learning types when preparing lessons. Do "learner types" in fact exist at all? And how can they be reliably described? This was the question investigated by a Germany study. The result? There are two poles: the positive and the negative learning syndrome. ▶

Learning in, for and through the workplace

Nordic countries. Successful competence development requires careful planning; is an important conclusion of the research team responsible for the Nordic study on work-place learning. The organisation's training needs must be taken into consideration in the overall development strategy and HR policies. ▶

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Three million adults will be taught to read and write

Turkey. This month in Turkey a "Turkey is Reading" campaign will be launched under the leadership of President Abdullah Gül. ▶

Family education

Germany. For everyday family life to be a success, in view of the challenges families are faced with today, it is particularly important that the social environment, as the space where families live, is well-organised. ▶

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

National statistics on continuing education moving towards Europe

Agora: Multifunctional Community Centre

Hungary. The less developed settlements of Hungary may bid for infrastructure subsidies for the development of community centres. The goal is to provide facilities for community activities, training and entertainment to local inhabitants. ▶

The latest trend in the Netherlands: Demand-driven education in the local area

Netherlands. In the Netherlands, adult education has proven to be most effective if courses are organised locally, close to where people live ▶

Trade union will talk education with every member

Denmark. "Many of our members are reluctant towards education. That is why we have to grab every single member by the hand – and treat him or her with respect." Says Per Christensen. ▶

You don't need to go out to work, just be there!

Norway. This is the slogan of Telenor Open Mind, which is a division of the Norwegian telecoms giant, Telenor. Telenor Open Mind is involved in the training of people with disabilities and getting them integrated into the working community. ▶

Further news

Ireland: AONTAS celebrates achievements of adult learners ▶

UK: skill campaign launched ▶

Book review: Ageing and education. ▶

Germany. *European educational statistics are often presented in such an abstract way that insufficient attention is paid to the specific characteristics of the national educational systems. The "Adult Education Survey" (AES) should in future help to overcome this dilemma. The German test run with its data published in mid-February shows that national and international interests can be reconciled.*

(Peter Brandt) To what extent is the population involved in continuing education? On the basis of educational research the answer to this question varies considerably – depending on the approach of the underlying research model. Because European statistics have to work with a certain degree of abstraction, specific national characteristics can often be obscured. The "Adult Education Survey" (AES), a reporting tool for European educational statistics which is expected to be binding for all EU Member States by 2011, should help overcome this dilemma. This concept is in line with the Lisbon Process, in which the EU has ultimately focussed more clearly on adult education with a "Communication" from the Commission and an Action Plan.

Terminology problems

The survey tool is currently under trial in a number of countries and the initial results from Germany are now available. As data was collected using the traditional German survey model at the same time, it is a simple matter to measure the compatibility of the national and international consultation. Subject to appropriate translation, the results are gratifyingly similar, which is also the finding of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which commissioned the representativity survey in both forms. On 19th February the Ministry and the commissioned organisation, TNS Infratest Sozialforschung and associates, including the German Institute for Adult Education, presented the results to a specialist audience.

The researchers have come up with participation rates for continuing education in 2007 of 43% (national model) and 44% (international basis). "Weiterbildung" is to be understood as "non-formal education" – as distinct from "formal education" and "informal learning". Specifically, non-formal education covers private lessons or courses (classroom instruction, lecture or a theoretical and practical course), courses conducted through open and distance education or guided on-the-job training.

The concept of informal learning on the basis of AES is geared to intentional learning and is closer in meaning to the German word "Selbstlernen" (self-study). Within informal learning the results of the national and international surveys diverge widely (participation rates of 39% and 53% respectively), which can be explained by the fact that the international survey also includes self-study during working time and not just in leisure time.

As a central indicator for country comparisons the participation rates are considered over all types of learning activity (formal, non-formal, informal). The results in this respect are again very close. They indicate that 70% of the population aged 19-64 in Germany are actively studying (69% AES, 72% national study).

International compatibility

In one point the national way of reporting has to bow to the pressure of international compatibility, at least that's the way those responsible for the survey described here see it: the traditional German distinction between vocational and general continuing education cannot be applied in the European context. So Bernhard von Rosenblatt and his team from TNS Infratest propose that a distinction should be made on the basis of the subjective purpose of continuing education – "mainly for vocational reasons" or "more out of personal interest". According to this logic, a good 80% of continuing education recorded is work-related. The "work-related" continuing education as shown in the AES is in turn divided into company and individual education. This produces a different set of types "three types of continuing education", ranked in the following order on the basis of course attendance: company education has 60%, individual work-related education another 24%, the remaining 16% goes to non-work-related education. Company-based continuing education is therefore more significant than is often thought. ▶

Case study: Learning communities in Europe

Europe *A new publication brings into question the issue of regional network strategies aiming at implementing structures of lifelong learning in the local context, the so-called learning communities.*

(Silke Schreiber-Barsch) Since the 1970s, the idea of lifelong learning has left its marks on the international education and training discourse. It has proved to be adaptive to different societal and theoretical imperatives. Nevertheless -- or: perhaps due to this --, lifelong learning has been successful in having been awarded a crucial role up to now. However, the main impetus of lifelong learning strategies has indeed changed, leaving its mainly theoretically based position in favour of backing up pragmatic oriented approaches. Thus, we have witnessed throughout Europe since the beginning of the 1990s a rising debate on the topic of regional strategies. Learning regions, educating / learning cities, or, summarised: learning communities have been declared, representing the alliance of the principles lifelong learning, region and network. ▶