

Strengthening the Marginalized Communities in Palestine through Civic Education Approaches

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Environmental Adult Education (EAE): Course of Action for Pakistani Education System

Srabani Maitra

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Essential Readings in International and Comparative Adult Education

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Editorial

Peter Mayo

Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal in its revived form, that was resuscitated two years ago at Volume 43 no 1, and as a bi-annual Journal, is gradually being re-established as a prominent outlet in the field of Adult Continuing Education. Key figures in the area are contributing. There have also been events to support such writing. Four papers in this issue, emerging from the first Global Adult Education Malta Seminar in November 2023, organised by the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education at the University of Malta, responsible also for this journal's revival, derive directly from this event. These are the ones by Marcella Milana, Rose Kando, David Abril and Angel Marzo Guarinos and Elisabeth Lange. Canada, Italy, Palestine and Spain are the sources of these papers added to by others from Austria and Germany.

Each year, we keep losing stalwarts in the field whose contributions and personal qualities are highlighted in the In Memoriam section. One such stalwart is R.H. Dave from India, a major figure in the Lifelong Education movement that gravitated around UNESCO in the 70s and in the context of the multi-authored *Learning to be*, otherwise referred to as the Faure Report. This takes me back to my initial steps in Educational Foundations when Professor Kenneth Wain taught us, prospective school teachers, a study unit on Lifelong Education. I quite recall Dave's notion of vertical and horizontal integration and his key edited text *Foundations of Lifelong Education*.

The area lent itself to different interpretations within its expansive UNESCO conceptualisations, some seeing it as utopian and futuristic with the preposition.

'towards' thrown in. There was also a more empiricist take on the concept: Lifelong Education already exists and research can highlight the various forms it takes. However, well after the UNESCO movement ran its course, the concept transmuted into Lifelong Learning. It began to be criticised for its overly economy-oriented turn. It became reductionist, with a connotation of *responsibilisation*, more individualistic than social. This was more in keeping with the Thatcherite mantra of there being no such thing as society. The OECD and the EU are often criticised for promoting this version of the concept. It became a key topic of critical policy research.

John Field was a key figure in this research as he was in other enquiries concerning Social Capital, Globalisation and Workers' Education, among others. I recall his slight criticism of my 2005 paper with Carmel Borg for *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, on the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, stating that, in his opinion,

we went a tad far in our assertion that it is very Neoliberal in tenor. He was, however, positive about our piece overall and seemed to gesture in this direction in his later writings on the matter. An article on Lifelong Education he wrote for the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* is de rigueur for anyone researching the evolution of the concept. I recall having recommended him to the Centre for Labour Studies (then the Workers' Participation Development Centre) at my university to deliver a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung-funded tripartite weekend seminar in Malta on Workers' Education. I can attest that he was impressive as key resource person for the seminar which involved trade union personnel, among others.

Well John is no more as a heart attack suddenly took him away from us. His co-researcher and former colleague, Tom Schuller is to be thanked for quickly agreeing to write a tribute to him for this issue. I also thank Kiran Mirchandani, Hongxia Shan and Bonnie Slade for agreeing to pit their memories together to honour Srabani Maitra whose relatively young life was snatched away when she was in her prime. Srabani, as the title of the tribute shows, was a major contributor to decolonizing Adult Education and had just been promoted to Full Professor at the University of Glasgow when she was struck down by meningitis. I knew her as a contributor to the Erasmus Mundus International Master in 'Adult Education for Social Change' which Bonnie Slade coordinates. One of her last contributions was to the recent book *Adult Education in India*, edited by Prasenjit Deb and Asoke Bhattacharya in the Brill series, *International Issues in Adult Education*. Her death was announced in this journal's December issue.

On a happier note, this year marks the 50th Anniversary of a landmark in the history of European Adult and Workers' Education: Italy's 150 hours experiment in working class education. In an age when social class continues to be placed on the back-burner and when the mere utterance of 'working class' often prompts, strange and unapproving looks in places generating this aura, since it renders the place less 'marketable', this occasion and its different celebrations can help restore this term's one-time collective dignity, its sense of solidarity-based warmth and belonging. As this issue goes to press, I speak as an invited contributor to a seminar marking the 150 hours (they were actually more than that) project deriving from the metal workers initiative in securing paid educational leave for non vocational education. This positively affected not simply employees but also women in general, boosting the feminist movement. Articles on this and related issues are welcome for future issues of *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal*.

Strengthening the Marginalized Communities in Palestine through Civic Education Approaches

Rose Kando

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Introduction

Education in its broad terms means an ongoing lifelong learning process that constantly brings out people's potential both as individuals and as members of society, who constantly seek to improve their living conditions, and to advance the quality of their lives through the acquisition of skills. ICCS, 2023 declares that civic education provides young people and society members with knowledge, understanding and dispositions considered necessary to participate successfully as citizens in society. It is therefore the individual that is considered the backbone of development, and lifelong learning and education are the bases through which comprehensive and sustainable development are achieved (Hassan, 2023).

The concepts and approaches of civic education are attributed to the legacy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who elaborates in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1997, the process of analyzing this relationship to arrive at the forms of consciousness and ways in which systematic oppression and marginalization function. His approach is based on dialogue as the most effective learning tool and the most democratic and humane way. Ruiz-Eugenio, Tellado, Valls-Carol and Gairal-Casadó, (2023) explain that, through dialogue, we not only learn from others, but we also learn about ourselves, and this makes us more conscious and more aware of "ourselves and our realities. As a result, we come to realize the state of marginalization, where awareness acts as the catalyst and the driver" for striving towards change (Thomsen and Weilage, 2023). This is because "only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education." (Freire, 2000, p.). Therefore, civic education forms a unique and realistic learning experience that reflects reality together with a state of knowledge that

is responsible for achieving awareness of actual needs, thus paving the way for a clearer vision of the future (Jerome and Moore, 2023).

The approach we are talking about here is known as Neighborhood (*Mujawarat* in Arabic) aims at driving the learning process within an environment of dialogue, which includes topics that address learners' daily urgent needs, and which the learners regard as basic burdensome problems that cause stress and pain (Hoggan-Kloubert and Mabery 2022). The concept of neighborhood based on the act of neighbourly visit of different members of society in the training needs identification process, take gender into consideration. The members share common desires and experiences gathered in an atmosphere of acquaintance, learning, dialogue, meditation, and self-enclosure. Sliva, Oliviera, Branco & Flores (2022) explain that cultural psychology, based on the notion of education as a historical and cultural process, constitutes practice and the understanding that the individual and society are built independently.

This paper will discuss the implementation of the neighborhood "Mujawarat" approach in community centers for youth and adult education in Palestinian marginalized villages and country-sides. The activities target two aspects: social participation and 'employability' and personal participation, which have a strong focus on practical application. Among the outcomes, new community initiatives are equally important as improving career prospects of individuals and strengthening local partners and to increase local ownership.

Community Centers for Adult Education

Since 2010, DVV International has accompanied the Ministry of Education, and Dar Al-Kalima University with local governmental sector in the development and implementation of a strategy for adult education. Eight Community centers have been established in 5 different Palestinian regions (Jenin and Nablus – northern district, Hebron -southern district, Jerusalem, and Gaza). They are flexible resources institutions established in accessible places open to people of all ages. The centers plan their activities based on the requests, requirements, and current needs of local people. The key missions of the adult education centers range all the way from animating professional growth by cultivating crucial skills, to forming an environment that encourages the lifelong quest for knowledge¹. Community centers focus on societal awareness as an integral part of intellectual and personal development to improve the quality of life of young people and adults and enable them to reach their full potential.

¹ Sanadze, R., & Santeladze, L. (2017). *Adult education centres as a key to development—challenges and success factors*

In addition, community centers for youth and adult education work to invest the energies of young people and their free time in acquiring various educational and professional skills within the framework of lifelong learning, which benefits the local community and contributes to positive change in social, economic, and cultural life and the strengthening of community solidarity. In addition, it encourages youth initiatives that motivate them to volunteer work and enhance youth participation in community work.

Community centers for youth and adult education provide within their programmes various areas of active and positive community participation, as a direct result of guidance and counseling sessions, as they work to stimulate volunteering, and adopt community and cultural initiatives as opportunities for people to put newly acquired knowledge and ideas into practice and actively participate in shaping their environment, which motivates more people to educate themselves and consult adult learning and education institutions. This path promotes the values of participation, community solidarity, community and popular learning that makes individuals feel liberated and provides new insights that help people acquire new competencies. Cultural learning paths, community initiatives, volunteer days, social entrepreneurship projects, cultural evenings and events, cultural and social exchange paths and other cultural, community and popular activities.

In the context of the cumulative and constructive experience of the work path with community centers for youth and adult education, the neighborhood approach (Mujawarat) was developed and piloted to serve learning and training opportunities in the community for the promotion of community and cultural learning opportunities and community participation opportunities.

Civic education activities (Mujawarat – Neighborhood)

The concept of the Mujawarat/Neighborhood is initiated by a Palestinian educator Munir Fasha, who believes that life experiences of each individual create statements of knowledge and defines it as the freedom for decisions and thinking that are shared among groups of individuals seeking to live accordingly and learn from other experiences². This process does not put the learner in a paradoxical context or in a situation of competitiveness within society, but rather seeks to strengthen interconnectedness with the rest of society to achieve mutual benefit. Since the discussion here is about leadership and innovation as human and social acts, it can therefore be argued that what

² Munir Fasha, *My Story with Mathematics* (Ramallah: Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2016), p. 41

contributes to the development of the individual would inevitably do likewise for society.

Education for development needs to break free from the “banking model of education” (Freire, 1970). The learner’s role is no less important than that of the facilitator, particularly that learners form the basis of the learning process. The type of learning societies needed is that which leads to an awakened consciousness and an awareness of the learners’ reality and the obstacles by which he/she is surrounded. This is because learners would in no way regard any problems raised within the learning process as real unless they revolve around fundamental issues related to their familial, social and economic life, and touch upon daily urgent needs in a manner that is consistent with the capaciousness and unity of life as whole.

The Mujawarat (Neighborhood Education), also known as emancipatory learning, was designed to enable the participants from the various societies to read life through raising awareness through dialogue, considered a process through which humans can learn the truth about their circumstances so that they can shift from a state of negative adaptation to a state of action and anticipation of opportunities.

In 2022, over 35 females and 3 males from the West Bank participated in the Mujawarat activities. Participants were mainly learners in the activities of community centers for adult education who registered, aiming for personal development that enhanced employability, and community and cultural learning and participation. It is essential to engage different groups of society in the training needs identification process, take gender into consideration and bring on board experts with various experiences.

Mujawarat within the Employability and Personal Development Process

This activity was given to 20 participants (local artisans): 17 females and 3 males who intended to establish small enterprises by gaining entrepreneurial competencies. The activity entailed three rounds of Mujawarat:

1. The 1st round is called “Education of Hope” and aims at highlighting and building on the importance of individuals’ active participation in collective and individual lifelong learning paths. Mutual support and shared learning experiences are understood as two main components of resilience, both for individuals and for communities at large. This round took place in the Dar al-Kalima campus before joining the technical learning courses aimed at increased employability of the

participants. The training lasted for 55 hours including mosaic training workshops, packaging and online marketing which all were given at the workshops inside the DAK campus by professionals.

2. The 2nd round is called “a Road Map” and aims at supporting the learners to see their potential alongside the possible roads available (or those that can be made available) for them to decide on their next steps and plans. This round takes place directly after the participants finish the technical and complementary training path of learning or personal development courses. Many products were created by the participants and provided a digital website for marketing, also they took part in cultural festivals that are organized by the DVVI “Stories of Palestine” that enables them to sell their product locally and internationally.
3. The 3rd round takes place six months later and is called “Reflection”. It allows the group to revisit their road maps, reflect on what happened in reality, how it impacted them and what they aspire to do next.

Mujawarat within Community and Cultural Learning and participation

This activity targeting 15 women from one of the Palestinian refugee camps in Bethlehem. These women are active and sources of influence among their communities, aiming to solve some of society’s problems. The activity entailed three rounds of Mujawarat:

1. The 1st round is “Land Preparation”, preparing the group of learners with concepts and establishing a dialogue about identity and community. Through using the PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) method, different social problems were proposed such as pollution, recycling awareness, bullying at schools, women rights, etc.
2. The 2nd round is “Pouring Seeds and fixing them in the fertile land”, reflection on a learning path action for the local community by the group. The participants were distributed into three groups and practiced the Mujawarat activity among their societies to come up with the two main issues that were needed to be solved for community development.

A week later, two short courses were implemented in a local cultural center about community mobilization. There was also the writing of proposals for community initiatives, aiming to orient the participants to structure the plan for their community development.

Two proposals were made, the first about recycling awareness and bullying; targeting the young adults at high schools believing that the change can be initiated with this society segment.

3. The 3rd round involves appreciating wheat spikes and harvest; a final round of reflection on the results of this collective work on individuals and on their community and discussion on what happens with the spikes next.

Results Civic Education Activities

Civic education provides opportunities for active participation, promotes the development of attitudes towards important aspects of civic life, and develops dispositions in young people to make positive contributions to their societies. Carretero, Haste and Bermundez (2015) explains that experiencing real-life civic action is important to cultivate civic identities that provide authentic and effective sources of motivation, purpose, responsibility, agency, and efficiency. Thus, participants' feedback and pre- and post- training documentation suggest that there is a positive influence on restoring hope and positive thinking. Participants developed new perspectives on the importance of learning and active participation as well as restoring their trust in what they can do to change the reality for themselves and for their communities.

The socio-economic domain, as justified by Hebert and Sears (2001), requires knowledge of social relations in society and social skills, as well as vocational training and economic skills for job- related and other economic activities. Some participants, especially artisans, were able to gain for the first time new financial support for their small projects after they were introduced through this project to professionals who saw their determination and success. Ehrlich (1997) contended that "Civic learning—in the sense of how a community works and how to help it work better and learning are mutually reinforcing". (Ehrlich,1997, p. 61)

Community wellbeing is a function of many factors working in concert to promote an optimal quality of life for all members of a community. Merriam and Kee (2015) declare the relationship between lifelong learning and community wellbeing is argued from a social capital perspective. In addition, Herbert and Sears (2001) indicate that the social citizenship refers to the relations between individuals in a society and demands loyalty and solidarity, in which, after the project, several small groups of participants initiated a number of community initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life in their

communities and finding new income-generating opportunities for themselves and for their families.

The Mujawarat approaches have driven the learning process within an environment of dialogue, which includes topics that address learners' daily urgent needs especially the effect of bullying upon school kids, and which the learners regard as basic burdensome issues that cause stress and pain. Freire emphasizes that dialogue generates critical thinking, and without dialogue there can be no communication, while without communication there can be no education. Therefore, exposing such a need for dialogue calls for broadening our perspectives and analyzing needs within a learning context that is consistent with the assessment of reality, and relevant to the reality of the local community.

Conclusion

Non-formal citizenship education in Palestine is oriented towards generating a sense of human dignity and empowerment of each individual to become capable of contributing to a free society, in which coherence, tolerance and friendship among people from all ethnic/ cultural/ religious backgrounds are strengthened and upheld; and in which individuals' unique personalities and characters are empowered and their respect to human rights, including the right to be different, are strengthened (Freire, 2008). Accordingly, the DVV International, Dar al-Kalima University and the Community Centers for Adult Education are working jointly to develop and provide programs to enhance Palestinian understanding of their own realities, challenges, and potential, both as individuals and as communities.

The learning process in both Mujawarat activities is based on dialogue with the community, forming a unique and realistic learning experience. Dialogue and appreciative mutual learning have to be at the core of any citizenship education activities in order to achieve the desired goals. It reflects reality together with a state of knowledge that is responsible for achieving awareness of actual needs. Empowering the local community centers for Adult Education and ensuring the sense of local ownership and collective benefit are key to the success of popular citizenship education approaches, thus, paving the way for a clearer vision of the future.

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Strengthening the Marginalized Communities in Palestine through Civic Education Approaches

Rose Kando

Abstract

The Mujawarat (Neighborhood Education) is an emancipatory learning designed to enable the participants from the societies to read life through raising awareness by the use of dialogue, which is considered a process through which humans can learn the truth about their circumstances so that they can shift from a state of negative adaptation to a state of action and anticipation of opportunities. Dar al-Kalima University with the DVV International implemented a civic education approach "Mujawarat" to 35 females and 3 males from Palestinian communities. The participants were mainly learners in the community centers for adult education activities who registered aiming for personal development that enhanced employability, and community and cultural learning and participation. It is essential to engage different groups of society in the training needs identification process, take gender into consideration and bring on board experts with various experiences. Among the outcomes, new community initiatives are equally important to improve career prospects of individuals and also to strengthen local partners and increase local ownership.

Key words

Civic Education – Neighborhood/ Mujawarat – dialogue – Community participation – Employability

Renforcer les communautés marginalisées en Palestine par des approches d'éducation civique

Rose Kando

Résumé

Le Mujawarat (éducation de quartier) est un apprentissage émancipatoire conçu pour permettre aux participants des sociétés de comprendre la vie en les sensibilisant grâce à l'utilisation du dialogue, considéré comme un processus permettant aux êtres humains d'apprendre la vérité sur leurs circonstances afin qu'ils puissent passer d'un état d'adaptation négative à un état d'action et d'anticipation des opportunités. L'université Dar al-Kalima, en collaboration avec la DVV International, a mis en œuvre une approche d'éducation civique "Mujawarat" auprès de 35 femmes et 3 hommes issus de communautés palestiniennes. Les participants étaient principalement des apprenants dans les centres communautaires pour les activités d'éducation des adultes qui se sont inscrits en vue d'un développement personnel améliorant l'employabilité, ainsi que l'apprentissage et la participation communautaires et culturels. Il est essentiel d'impliquer différents groupes de la société dans le processus d'identification des besoins en formation, de prendre en compte la dimension du genre et de faire appel à des experts ayant des expériences diverses. Parmi les résultats obtenus, les nouvelles

initiatives communautaires sont tout aussi importantes pour améliorer les perspectives de carrière des individus que pour renforcer les partenaires locaux et accroître l'appropriation locale.

Mots clés

Éducation civique, Mujawarat, dialogue, participation communautaire, employabilité

Fortalecimiento de las comunidades marginadas en Palestina mediante enfoques de educación cívica

Rose Kando

Resumen

El Mujawarat (Educación Vecinal) es un aprendizaje emancipador diseñado para capacitar a los participantes de las sociedades para comprender la vida mediante la sensibilización a través del diálogo, considerado como un proceso mediante el cual los seres humanos pueden aprender la verdad sobre sus circunstancias para poder pasar de un estado de adaptación negativa a un estado de acción y anticipación de oportunidades. La Universidad Dar al-Kalima, en colaboración con DVV International, implementó un enfoque de educación cívica denominado "Mujawarat" con 35 mujeres y 3 hombres de comunidades palestinas. Los participantes eran principalmente estudiantes de los centros comunitarios para actividades de educación de adultos que se inscribieron con el objetivo de lograr un desarrollo personal que mejorara la empleabilidad, así como el aprendizaje y la participación comunitaria y cultural. Es esencial involucrar a los distintos grupos de la sociedad en el proceso de identificación de las necesidades de formación, tener en cuenta el género y contar con expertos con diversas experiencias. Entre los resultados, las nuevas iniciativas comunitarias son igualmente importantes para mejorar las perspectivas laborales de las personas y también para fortalecer a los socios locales y aumentar la apropiación local.

Palabras clave

Educación cívica, Barrio/Mujawarat, diálogo, Participación comunitaria, Empleabilidad

(Not to) Care about the future? How pedagogical authority is established within hegemony

Janek Niggemann

Austrian Institute for Adult Education/University of Vienna

"There is no such thing as 'from the beginning ', especially if you, as the subject of a critical tradition, want to rethink and practice this very tradition; or if one wants to reinvent criticism because so much barbarism persists despite all the criticism articulated in the past."
(Ruth Sonderegger 2019, p.13)

"There is no male figure who has the definitive answer to everything or the power to enforce his answer in every case." (Paul Verhaeghe 2014, p. 53)

(Educational) authority has a bad reputation, and largely rightly so. There is a whole range of legitimate points of attack for criticism of personal authorities among those in government and companies, of teachers, parents, or professors. In addition to this obvious possibility of criticism of visible authorities, there are other elements, too. One way of making authority a problem (of and for others) is to refrain from reflecting on one's own references to authority relationships and to raise oneself above those who follow. Some people or groups who see themselves as emancipatory or progressive find it easier to criticize power structures in general than their entanglement with their own or other authority habits, like the will to power or the gendered, racialized, and class-biased assumptions of leadership skills or political capacities. In egalitarian groups and milieus in which there is a claim to equal rights, authority is criticized as outdated and romantic view backwards, while "stars" and idols of critique and reason continue to exist. They see themselves committed to "ideals" such as freedom, transformative justice, or radical criticism itself.

Conservative to reactionary positions claim to see authority and hierarchies as necessary, natural, and unavoidable facts that spread from the natural

superiority of men. In the absence of (male imagined) authority or charismatic leaders, or in the deviation from what is seen as the natural order, these notions constitute one of the main causes of pedagogical or social problems: people do not obey or follow well, are headstrong or busy with "unimportant things" like language or their feelings. Simple causes and their desired effects are retrospectively attributed to the correct action of authorities, justified by their inheritance of tradition. In this way, complex relationships are simplified and reduced to cause-and-effect schemes. What is ignored is that simple solutions can only develop their supposedly immediate effect based on complex mediated social processes, that they must ignore to claim, that it is a simple relation.

As fragmented as the examples remain here, we see that the question of authority is about the interaction of structural conditions and personal habits, and that we should be careful about choosing either side alone. The framework of what is conceivable and possible is already given within the problem formulated: either structural criticism or a focus on personal aspects. I am interested in the tension between the two, because in this outline of the problem it is still unclear how the "people" or "groups" relate to each other socially and in terms of authority. They are differently involved in the process of hegemony formation. They form what is specific to hegemony, namely combining leadership with teaching, governing with pedagogy, and aligning both towards a promise for the future to become something better, if not desirable. Do only "the simple" subordinate themselves? And do people "simply" subordinate themselves? If that were true, then the problem of authority relations would be relatively easy to deal with. As simple as it should be, it just isn't that simple.

(Pedagogical) authority keeps hegemony dynamic

In dealing with Niccolò Machiavelli and Benedetto Croce, the Italian communist and intellectual Antonio Gramsci defined political leadership and social leadership relationships in a double sense: firstly, as an interpersonal relationship between teachers and learners and secondly as an overall and grounding social structural relationship between groups, who are seen as carriers of and actors within ideologies. These leadership relations influence the groups, both within them and emanating from them. Consequently, for Gramsci, the "solution to the »authority« problem" consists in "the consensual restoration of political leadership" (Gramsci 1991, p. 1266). The imminent dissolution of authority relationships or circumstances can be prevented by a newly negotiated consensus with the managed groups, by, for example, ascribing more value to the interests of these groups. The debate on authority

thus raises more than the question of scholastic authority: it is about the future and the problem of a legitimate perpetuation and transformation of political leadership, which sets out to shape this future. The legitimacy of hegemony and the recognition of leaders as political leaders become an explicit problem when their pedagogical authority dwindles because of political-strategic mistakes, within crises or transformation processes, or because of wrong policies. In comprehensive organic crises, which Gramsci conceptually opposes to the governable economic crises, a social group loses its authority if it can only manage the most severe aspects of a crisis, but cannot become a force of transformation, of renewal in and out of this crisis. Gramsci did not speak explicitly of pedagogical authority. In his critique of progressive pedagogy, or protractivism, and civil societal processes of negotiating culture in work and life, however, “public pedagogies” (Giroux 2003) become fundamentally relevant. People work, negotiate, coordinate, and learn about the dissemination and proliferation of leadership in the future by way of informal processes throughout state and civil society. In these negotiations of hegemony, pedagogical authority designates the pedagogical dimension of socialization. Only this practical orientation of the political dimensions of leadership and the pedagogical orientation of learning hegemonic premises together ensures the dissemination and adoption of certain theories and views as practically relevant orientations. Pedagogical authority can thus be more precisely defined and practically worked out as an educational mode, as the educational dimension of political leadership. It invents, conceives, and coordinates forms of guidance, of following and of acting as role models for the groups it specifically addresses, friends or foes. In doing so, it coordinates the interests of the groups with the political projects of the leading groups in such a way that consensual, practical involvement can arise, and a lasting relationship of succession is formed and maintained without calling into question the social hierarchy between leaders and led, governors and governed.

Hegemony is dynamic because it uses pedagogical authority by learning to assimilate criticism and resistance into its political projects. Projects are partially absorbed or weakened in their critique to use them for the renewal of a political program in a weakened form. Characteristic of hegemonic rule is not only the access to the state monopoly for the use of force, but also political leadership. Leadership constantly re-learns to lead by becoming a pedagogical authority and realizes an internal ability to reform by articulating the groups excluded, marginalized, or otherwise excluded through protests, criticism, and resistance. In other words: it transforms criticism into a source for the renewal of its own projects. It learned to use criticism to renew their own tradition, as assimilation to demonstrate its democratic character and at the same time strip them of their sharp edges and radical demands. Authority within the

framework of hegemonic rule is therefore much more than the charisma of a person. Authority can arise or be supported by reference to tradition as well as in relation to ideas and projects such as "enlightenment", "liberty" or "justice" that are yet to become real. However, the hegemonic consensus is not voluntary assent. It is "armoured with coercion" (Gramsci 1991, p. 783), which is exercised economically and through law, justice systems and institutions or the pressure to conform to shared norms. Consent includes prior or anticipated obedience out of fear, shame, and dread. State coercion is supplemented by civil society's forms of political exclusion of groups based on attributions of certain characteristics through racism, sexism, class apartheid and other ideologies of social inequality. To become a hegemonic leader, the dominant social groups must change and perpetuate themselves at the same time. Hegemony is a process of hierarchical consensus-forming. Each transformation of this consensus requires constant action, tactics and learning to combine the forces of different groups, play them off against one another or give orientation in the medium and long term without completely remodeling the arrangement itself. The resulting political-social hierarchies are regulated with the help of pedagogical authority, by establishing and transforming the structure of social relationships through teaching and learning. Political leadership repeatedly declares social hierarchies to be eternal, just and justified, while pedagogical authority teaches how to live within these hierarchies. The justifications and the limits of the livable options look different for each group, as they are differently embedded in or benefit from the hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. Hegemony acquires a pedagogical quality by transferring pedagogical conditions to political possibilities and vice versa. In such a perspective, pedagogy and pedagogical practice cannot be understood as neutral. They are political, especially where they insist on their neutrality and independence from politics. They constitute groups that learn to distinguish themselves from others and to exploit or cooperatively transcend arbitrary boundaries in the struggle for the group's position, opportunities, and resources. Authority and the political regulation of authority relationships are a central mode and medium for this process which is essentially based on a combination of leadership and inequality. Thus, hegemony presupposes pedagogically guided action and the learning of the rulers to make ideologically, morally, ethically, and culturally specific ways of life binding for everyone. The relationships between the dominant and the dominated are thus transformed into "hegemonic relationships between the rulers and the ruled, between the leaders and the led" (Merkens 2006, p. 8). Where it is politically about persuasion, creating acceptance and working on a consensus for the projects to be implemented, leadership mainly takes place as a pedagogical practice from a political perspective or an anticipated direction. The authority of the circumstances is not given per se, but rather the result and starting point

of hegemony as an internal pedagogical relationship in which social hierarchies are negotiated as positions and worked on between leaders and followers constantly (Giroux 2004, p.60). These are the areas where practical negotiations take place. This entails political-pedagogical struggles over meaning, perspective, values, and directions along the questions of them to be considered true, reasonable, and legitimate.

Authority as Authorization

Authority is realized through authorization i.e. through the delegation of leadership by those who submit to it, as the successor to a law, a person, a political project, or a shared perspective on the future. The bestowal of authority can be based on tradition, ability, ascribed gender, level of education, and so forth. It is the case that recognition itself is the result of hierarchical attributions of strength, power, wisdom, and superiority within social hierarchies. These attributions are based only to a certain extent on a conscious decision. They are also dependent on habit and heritage, not to mention the important argument of the unconscious. Are they treated as facts or as something that people produce cooperatively in social relationships and that should be considered analytically? The standards of strength, ability, etc. are neither neutral, nor is there a coherent picture without the compulsion to follow one's ideals and the horror that can accompany it. Hegemony as the leadership of those who are addressed or seen as authority is based to a considerable extent on the belief of the ruled and led, that social hierarchies are traditionally natural, justified and just. In the background of authorization processes, there are hierarchical social structures that consist of habitual practices of recognition and of addressing issues that are constantly being transformed back into "nature". Pedagogical authority contributes to this, because it is a mode of disseminating and stabilizing hegemonic premises and frameworks. It can be handed down through the bureaucratization of procedures or the formalization of law, i.e. through the containment of social disputes, through the development of negotiation structures, of formalized rules and processes that make people forget the conditions in which they came into being.

In it, pedagogical authority becomes the central mode with which domination and leadership are connected and in which the voluntary consent is also based on the tradition of an education in the belief in the "power of facts", not only on charisma, violence, and prohibition. The social hierarchies do not only structure thinking, acting, and feeling, but also fragment people's bodies and souls and thus also their bodily and unconscious perceptions of hegemonic conditions and the standards for evaluating, assessing, and classifying them. For the pedagogical reorganization and reworking of hegemony, it is relevant

whether and how people cling (consciously or unconsciously) to past or incorporated experiences, standards, and perspectives. Accordingly, within the concept of hegemony, authority can be described both as a pedagogical dimension of leading and as the practice of authorizing hegemonic leadership (cf. Niggemann 2021). Only the complex interaction of political leadership and pedagogical authority with the real bodies and (un-)consciousnesses of people is productive in this sense: as a translation of the structural economic and state-legalized compulsion into normalized premises for daily action. It is in the smaller and greater practices of everyday routines where hegemony is rooted and contested. Hegemony as a dynamic power structure produces forms of economic necessities, identity assignments or epistemic ignorance by hierarchically integrating, dividing, and excluding groups daily. At the same time, the possibilities of groups are limited along what is considered legal and normal for them and who enjoys the privilege of being left alone, not being addressed, and not being persecuted or murdered. The pedagogical-political means for this range from organizing ideologies and symbolic violence to the transmission of techniques and the production of contingent perspectives through theories, aesthetics, images, stories, fantasies, and narratives.

In educational research, pedagogical authority is understood as a co-production in which the power to authorize is only brought about performatively in an interaction of social structures, historical habits, and the act of authorizing through authorizing persons themselves. Authority is lent, not owned as a property or through demanding it. In this sense it is co-produced. Authorization is understood to ground all those processes in which professionals are granted legitimate (pedagogical) authority for something based on ascribed characteristics. The variables include those of gender, identity, affiliation, norms governing bodies, language, or skills. Authority is a result of authorization processes, i.e. the articulation of social position and positive or negative assessments with attributions of competence. It is not a personal quality or specific competence, but a multiple structured relationship in a net of social hierarchies. The tricky thing is that there are conscious and unconscious authorizations, so we first must get to know the workings of both dimensions. For example, people believe in the ability of a teacher to be able to process important knowledge from unimportant knowledge in such a way that it advances students' studies and later helps or is useful to them in their occupation. At the same time, what is believed, considered legitimate or taken seriously can vary. Authorizations do not happen by chance, but according to notions of normality, because they produce "arbitrary boundaries" (Bourdieu, quoted in Jurt 2003, p.159), for example through educational qualifications. Authorizations are not limited to personal relationships but are socially structured hierarchies that are practically used to classify, evaluate, and

exclude. For example, by exercising a monopoly over titles of educational qualifications, the state controls boundaries between professionals and addressees, between professors and laypersons, etc. Pedagogical authority is potentially ascribed to all those who have acquired a recognized title who can rely on the authenticity of their experience to teach, demonstrate, and train. In social pedagogy, for example, it is common to use the status of a “proven expert” to build trust and get closer to a socially distant clientele. These kinds of authorizations, based on experience and authenticity, are also particularly popular and significant in pop culture. They illustrate the success of an intervention in the near or distant future. Here the proximity to pedagogy becomes clear, which must build on a promise for the future to legitimize its function as educators and teachers in the present.

Forming futures

Authority becomes evident when its self-evident effect begins to dwindle or to transform itself, for example, when it turns back into coercion and loses its legitimacy. Authority consequently functions “naturally”, i.e. discreetly and invisibly, if it is considered “natural” and does not require any explicit legitimation. It initially includes everything that “corresponds to the facts” and is perceived as “natural”. The naturalness is created performatively by asserting and claiming that a social context is something objective, thing-like, for example an unchangeable schema “as thought or given” by nature such as “gender”. In this imagination gender only exists in two complementary, hierarchical opposites, to which properties are ascribed. It is only in this way that a certain idea of “gender” is authorised, i.e. a social process is transformed into a property and a hierarchy of gendered wealth distribution. Like power, authority only appears when it is questioned, problematized, or dissolved. Naming it or describing its mechanisms influences their social function: if something “natural” becomes visible as something socially made, there can no longer be any talk of an impeccable nature. Authority and power are relations and relationships between people and groups that become visible where they are interrupted, disrupted, or sabotaged. The personal authority of the father in the family corresponds to the cross-group para-state men's association in the bourgeois state, which declares itself to be universal and at the same time remains. This traditional patriarchal version of authority is being questioned from many positions. Thus, it becomes visible as a process in which a particular group claims to make, determine and defend the rules and laws for all and to define habits for all. The fact that there is protest this enables a democratization of social practice, in which more groups have a say and claim a say in decision-making. But only if they succeed in extending the frame of the think- and sayable.

Why is it so important in this context to understand the connections between social hierarchies and the legitimation for personal-related pedagogical action? On the one hand, because there cannot be a one-dimensional conception of pedagogy if the effective context of pedagogical action is socially created and changed. On the other hand, there remains an unanswered question how education legitimizes itself when its reference to the future becomes uncertain because it becomes problematic or less desirable for ever larger groups. A serious desire for self-reflection avoids the illusion that there could be a self-"transparent" state in which one's own motives, wishes, desires and intentions would be fully or finally revealed. They are construed, interpreted, and negotiated, with oneself and with others, and in this respect are genuine social processes in which the various positions, situations and perspectives become relevant. Interests, desires, emotions, or habits of thought are necessarily multidimensional and partly unconscious. Education theory and psychoanalysis have this insight in common: Without the purposeless association of the object with affects, thoughts and fragments, no alternative interpretations can arise. What is prevented in school, namely overinterpretation, becomes a tactic in the search for possible courses of action outside the known. Excessive or literal interpretation that are practiced, re-learned, and seem inappropriate may enable a changed perspective that is able to withstand the pull of habit in thinking and acting. The shifted perspective, the pause, the gap, the slip, the void, and the emptiness are suitable for countering the closedness of a technological or dominance-based future perspective with something else that Donna Haraway (2003) proposes to grasp with the term "cohabitat/cohabitation". A life in a need-based coexistence rather than in a relationship of robbing, consuming, and dominating nature, the self, and living beings.

So, it remains to be asked how pedagogical action can be legitimized if there are no longer any future promises that justify current interventions and concepts. The finite nature of resources contrasts with the socio-technological dissolution of boundaries in future designs. If education wants to contribute to sustainable learning processes by means of temporarily limited pedagogical authority, then it can actively intervene. And that means exploring new ways that pick up on an old promise: being able to change without having to become something specific at the expense of others. A temporally limited and democratically legitimized pedagogical authority takes on responsibility for teaching and learning for a future that is still unwritten, but in which there are spaces and rights for everyone to grow and learn.

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(Not to) Care about the future? How pedagogical authority is established within hegemony

Janek Niggemann

Abstract

The text explores the complex interplay between authority, hegemony, and pedagogy, drawing on various philosophical and educational perspectives. It argues that authority, often associated with hierarchical structures, is both socially constructed and contested. Pedagogical authority, particularly in shaping futures, is crucial in legitimizing social hierarchies and maintaining power dynamics. Hegemony utilizes pedagogical authority to assimilate criticism and perpetuate its dominance, transforming resistance into a source of renewal. The narrative delves into the multifaceted nature of authority, emphasizing its performative aspect and its reliance on social recognition and legitimization processes. It discusses the importance of understanding the connections between social hierarchies and pedagogical actions, especially in uncertain future contexts. The concept of pedagogical authority is reimagined as a temporally limited and democratically legitimized force that takes responsibility for fostering inclusive learning environments conducive to sustainable growth. Ultimately, the text calls for a reevaluation of pedagogical practices considering changing socio-political landscapes, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of authority and its role in shaping collective futures.

Key words

Hegemony, Authority, Care, Education, Future

(Ne pas) se soucier de l'avenir ? Comment l'autorité pédagogique est établie au sein de l'hégémonie

Janek Niggemann

Résumé

Ce texte explore l'interaction complexe entre l'autorité, l'hégémonie et la pédagogie, en s'appuyant sur diverses perspectives philosophiques et éducatives. Il soutient que l'autorité, souvent associée à des structures hiérarchiques, est à la fois socialement construite et contestée. L'autorité pédagogique, en particulier celle qui consiste à façonner l'avenir, est cruciale pour légitimer les hiérarchies sociales et maintenir la dynamique du pouvoir. L'hégémonie utilise l'autorité pédagogique pour assimiler les critiques et perpétuer sa domination, transformant la résistance en source de renouveau. Le récit explore les multiples facettes de l'autorité, en soulignant son aspect performatif et sa dépendance à l'égard de la reconnaissance sociale et des processus de légitimation. Il souligne l'importance de comprendre les liens entre les hiérarchies sociales et les actions pédagogiques, en particulier dans des contextes futurs incertains. Le concept d'autorité pédagogique est réimaginé comme une force limitée dans le temps et légitimée démocratiquement qui prend la responsabilité de favoriser des environnements d'apprentissage inclusifs propices à une croissance durable. En fin de compte, le texte appelle à une réévaluation des pratiques pédagogiques en tenant compte des paysages sociopolitiques changeants, en plaidant pour une compréhension plus nuancée de l'autorité et de son rôle dans le façonnement de l'avenir collectif.

Mots clés

Hégémonie, Autorité, Soins, Éducation, Avenir

¿(No) preocuparse por el futuro? Cómo se establece la autoridad pedagógica dentro de la hegemonía

Janek Niggemann

Resumen

El texto explora la compleja interacción entre autoridad, hegemonía y pedagogía, basándose en diversas perspectivas filosóficas y educativas. Sostiene que la autoridad, a menudo asociada con estructuras jerárquicas, se construye socialmente y se cuestiona. La autoridad pedagógica, especialmente en la configuración del futuro, es crucial para legitimar las jerarquías sociales y mantener las dinámicas de poder. La hegemonía utiliza la autoridad pedagógica para asimilar las críticas y perpetuar su dominio, transformando la resistencia en fuente de renovación. La narrativa profundiza en la naturaleza polifacética de la autoridad, haciendo hincapié en su aspecto performativo y en su dependencia de los procesos de reconocimiento y legitimación social. Analiza la importancia de comprender las conexiones entre las jerarquías sociales y las acciones pedagógicas, especialmente en contextos de futuro incierto. El concepto de autoridad pedagógica se reimagina como una fuerza

temporalmente limitada y democráticamente legitimada que asume la responsabilidad de fomentar entornos de aprendizaje inclusivos que conduzcan a un crecimiento sostenible. En última instancia, el texto hace un llamado a la reevaluación de las prácticas pedagógicas teniendo en cuenta los cambiantes paisajes sociopolíticos, abogando por una comprensión más matizada de la autoridad y de su papel en la configuración de futuros colectivos.

Palabras clave

Hegemonía, Autoridad, Cuidado, Educación, Futuro

International Comparative Adult Education: Seven reflections I expect to read in each study.

Checklist for beginning, during, or after

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Research never is perfect. We should expect in all studies, however, that researchers not only present their findings, but also their reflections on limitations as well as bias, and offer open questions for further research.

While these guidelines are applicable to research in all subjects and disciplines, Comparative Adult Education has its specific pitfalls of which researchers should be aware and on which they should reflect. Examples include personal blindness, political correctness, unavailable data, and misunderstanding of language, just to mention a few. Including such reflections in the research report/presentation/publication will provide a more objective, reliable, valid, honest, and self-critical contribution to knowledge in the field. The hope is that knowing the pitfalls will make international and comparative work sounder and more enjoyable, and avoid - or at least mitigate - weaknesses.

In the following discussion, I will present a selection of seven reflections I suggest be discussed in international comparative studies. This selection is based on 30 years of experience and observations in the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE, www.ISCAE.org) and its publications (<http://www.iscae.org/publications.htm>, especially Reischmann 2021). Frequently in this paper old sources will be used to demonstrate that there is a long history of reflections on the method of comparison. These reflections presented here can be used as a sort of checklist before, during, or after an international-comparative project.

1. Why compare?

A first consideration should be to reflect, on what is expected from the comparison - the “why”. Is it just for curiosity (“Isn't it interesting that ..”), is it to learn and adopt something from abroad (“borrowing”), or is the goal to understand the other and one’s own system better?

Already in 1975 Roby Kidd offered a list of “common goals” of comparative studies, going beyond “borrowing” and “imitating”:

“The most common goals for comparative studies in adult education are:

- to become better informed about the educational system of other countries;
- to become better informed about the ways in which people in other cultures have carried out certain social functions by means of education;
- to become better informed about the historical roots of certain activities and thus to develop criteria for assessing contemporary developments and testing possible outcomes;
- to better understand the educational forms and systems operating in one's own country;
- to satisfy an interest in how other human beings live and learn;
- to better understand oneself;
- to reveal how one's own cultural biases and personal attributes affect one's judgment about possible ways of carrying on learning transactions.” (Kidd 1975, 75)

Researchers that reflect on these different “whys” will develop a deeper understanding of their work – and will discover more and richer aspects during that work, thus enriching the results and academic outcomes.

2. Start with description, move to analysis!

A first basic classification discriminates between “descriptive” and “analytical” studies: As a first step, the researcher always will describe with more or less methodological rigor aspects of adult education. In the “old days” of international comparison such was in the focus of interest; to make the descriptions more comparable, already the historic “Exeter Papers” (Liveright & Haygood 1968) developed a description framework studies should follow. Again in the new days especially the “big data” studies, with dozens of countries included, mostly remain on the description level.

These descriptive studies look comprehensive and impressive. For sure, researchers should first supply a sound factographic basis. But (future) authors should be warned that an overload of data can lead to the “Descriptiveness-pitfall” (Bron 2008, 257), that is, describing instead of analyzing. The value of an international (one-country) study, however, is to make it understandable to others why, in a given national context, “the social, cultural, economic and political forces [that are] operating on the phenomena” (Titmus 1999, 37) are how they are. Moreover, in a comparative study (two or more countries): “That its author(s) look(s) explicitly for similarities and differences. ... A comparison ought to include explanations and reflections on why the similarities occur” (Bron 2008, 257).

Before starting an international comparative study it may be helpful to clarify how much description is wanted and how much analysis is possible, and to be aware that this decision can change during the research process.

3. Identify your type of international research!

When going more into the details of comparative research it might be confusing that - as Titmus stated as early as 1999 - “most what is included under the rubric of comparative studies ... does not include comparison in the strict sense” (36) and may be labeled “pre-comparative”. This openness, however, allows the researcher to use different types of research in international (comparative) studies - each with its strengths and weaknesses (www.ISCAE.org).

To reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the different types, researchers should at the outset identify the type of their attempt (Reischmann 2000, 13f).

- A first kind, mostly evaluated as ‘pre-scientific’, comprises ‘*traveler's tales*’, the reports we get from international travelers. If these descriptions are more systematic, they are labeled ‘traveler's reports’. These types of international documents are mostly characterized as ‘subjective-impressionistic’. Their value is evaluated as ambivalent: Critically it is argued that, because of the random observation and the subjective description, it is not clear how reliable and how representative the descriptions are. On the other hand, the plea is made that especially in this subjective focus of eye-witnesses there might be strength in this type of report.

At the scientific level, five types of international-comparative research are identified:

1. *Country-reports*: 'Adult Education in the Republic of ...' is a typical title of this type of report. These papers describe the system of adult and continuing education in one particular country. They could be written by an author of this country or by a person from outside. Some of these reports were, and are, rather impressionistic. Others followed a well-developed outline and structure.
2. *Program reports* describe foreign adult education programs, institutions, and organizations. Examples of this type can be found in the publications of Charters/Hilton (1989) or the case studies collected by Knox (1987). Included in this type (sometimes presented in a separate category) are the topic-oriented studies or the problem approach: a certain topic or problem is discussed in the context of a nation. Country reports as well as topic-oriented studies and the problem approach focus more on 'international' and less on 'comparative'. Because when only one country or program is presented, nothing to compare is available; the readers must draw comparative conclusions themselves.
3. A third type is juxtaposition. Data from two or more countries are presented: In country A we can observe a, in country B we find b. A series of statistical reports represent this type, but often no explicit comparison is given (e.g., where are the similarities, and what are the differences?).
4. The "real comparison" goes one step further: "A study in comparative international adult education ... must include one or more aspects of adult education in two or more countries or regions. Comparative study is not the mere placing side by side of data... . Such juxtaposition is only the prerequisite 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 attempt to understand why the differences and similarities occur and what their significance is for adult education in the countries under examination ..." (Charters and Hilton 1989, 3).
5. Finally field- and method-reflections are seen as part of international comparative adult education: reflections about the methods, strategies, and concepts of international comparison, and summarizing reports about developments in the international comparative field – as it is done in this article.

6. A bit outside of this system, but still counted as part of the international tradition, are reports from the adult educational work of international and transnational organizations such as UNESCO, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank.

It is helpful for interpretation and understanding for the author as well as the reader to identify and discuss the reason why the respective type was selected, and what the strengths and weaknesses are.

4. Reflect language as a possible pitfall!

The most common handicap in international comparative work is language: international communication takes place in English. Even this language, however, has its specific traps. Mansbridge, one of the pioneers of adult education in Britain and a restless traveler, reported an awkward situation: At a lecture in the USA he greeted the attending ladies with a word (“homely”), that in British English expresses appreciation, but in American English it means “super ugly”! (Mansbridge 1940, 95f).

It may comfort the new researcher that this problem even happens to high-ranked professionals. Already in one of the early publications (initiated and financed by the Council of Europe with 32 international experts from 12 West-European countries), Besnard & Liétard (1986, 4) noted in their editorial note: “the translation of the present text from French into English was made in ECLE [European Center for Leisure and Education, Prague]. Since there is uncertainty in adult education terminology world-wide, and important differences exist especially between French and English terminology, the translation was not easy”.

A first simple piece of advice is that native English speakers should take into account that English is a foreign language for most of their audience in an international context, and, accordingly, to avoid acronyms. In oral and written communication, it helps when one or two sentences explain what is meant - not just dropping names. Describing the context improves understanding.

To reduce the danger of misunderstanding it is helpful to have a network of colleagues in different countries. So the advice is: International societies such as ISCAE (www.ISCAE.org), ICAE (<http://icae.global/>), and ESREA (<https://esrea.org/>) are a great help to install such networks and exchanges. As a member of such societies, other researchers become available for correction and inspiration. This exchange can be on an informal person-to-

person contact, by Internet, or through participation in international conferences.

Another piece of advice is: to be critical of questionnaires and similar language-dependent instruments. The translation can lead to non-equivalent meanings for the different language groups. Bron (2008, 254) describes it as a “crucial issue ... whether questions and answers can be meaningfully translated from one language, and one social reality, into another”. Reichart (2017, 141) confirms this problem with the observation that “the simply translated questionnaire from the European manual [to the Kyrgyzstan context, JR] caused confusion among the survey institutes, the interviewers and the respondent” – even in such “simple” categories as “Household type” or “Marital status”. Another language limitation Sun & Erichsen point out (2012, 231): “when we introduce the East to the West, there is dearth of available literature for reference.”

Quite drastically, Guo & Beckett (2007, 117) call this language-problem to attention: “the increasing dominance of English language worldwide is contributing to neocolonialism by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantages further behind ... putting them in danger to losing their first languages, cultures and identities, and contributing to the devaluation of local knowledge and culture.”

On the other hand, what is the alternative? Without English, there would be no ‘worldwide’ exchange possible. It seems we have to live with that handicap and to reflect on it when it comes up in a research project. This reflection on language issues even can be seen as a result of an international comparative research project: to make aware how different and rich and unique countries and their cultures are.

5. How does culture define the object under observation?

Education is deeply rooted in the culture of a country. Sadler as early as 1900 (!) claimed: “we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools” (1900, 21). Institutions, laws, and political or cultural backgrounds are often so different that it is difficult to find an appropriate translation and comparison. Merriam (2007), as well as Sun & Erichsen (2012), illuminate the dramatic differences in perspectives on adult learning and education among different cultures. Moreover, Bron (2012) specifies pitfalls in comparative studies based on a cultural misunderstanding (“comparing the incomparable”).

Many aspects of culture influence the theory and practice of adult education: history, economy, religion, family tradition, the role of men and women, values –to name just some. Some of them might be more important in a specific research project, others less. Researchers should keep in mind that – as Jarvis (1992) states – “any comparative study of the education of adults requires a comparative study of the societies themselves” (1992, 128). This general claim of the words “culture” and “society” might threaten beginners in comparative research. Some authors use instead the term “context”. In both ways: A researcher who reflects on these is already in the stage of “analytical comparison” - trying to understand the topic under observation.

These cultural reflections can take place at the beginning of a research project. Often, however, they come during the research process: Things happen, and information can not be understood immediately. “‘You never know what happens’ – that is a shared experience when working in international comparative adult education” (Reischmann 2021, 283). Such an occurrence is typical for international comparative research. These “discoveries” a researcher should document in the report – it is a result of the study and will help future researchers in their work.

It helps, before starting such a project, to collect information about the history and culture of the other country, try to find other literature or pieces of research, and develop a specific mindset: to be open, listening, and curious. As Sun & Erichsen expressed, “In order to listen and learn from the reality of the East, we believe one’s mindset must be altered so openness and appreciativeness will come into play so we can recognize values we may otherwise miss” (2012, 232). This request sounds easy but definitely is not. Nevertheless, here applies a principle true in many life situations: It is better to do it half good than not starting to try!

Comparative research should not only look for similarities but also for differences. They might better enlighten the understanding of the cultural context, and add new perspectives to the improvement of comparative research. Lee (1999) points out at the end of a thorough comparison of values in Korea and Australia, that “characteristics which are significant in one culture and not in the other represents more important cross-cultural data than those characteristics that are relatively significant to both” (178).

6. What bias has the researcher?

“All forms of comparative work involve comparison by somebody” (Titmus 1999, 37). Research is always performed by humans who have their own

cultural backgrounds. This “selective perception” threatens, especially in international projects, the perception of “the other”. Bereday (1961!, 41) claims “never-ceasing watchfulness by the observer to control his own cultural or personal bias”.

Therefore, authors and researchers in international comparative adult education are advised to explicitly reflect on their personal cultural or personal background: the nearness to certain institutions, who pay for the research, feeling of a “mission” (open or hidden?), adult education as a social movement or “learning for earning”? Basically, are researchers blinded by what they see as “normal”? This reflection on the personal bias will have two results: First, it will bring about a deeper insight into the phenomenon under observation and, as well, it - hopefully - changes the personality of the researcher to develop a more open and understanding mindset, as already mentioned above (at 4.).

7. Read about the method of comparison!

This advice may sound unnecessary in the academic field: “When doing comparison, read about the method of comparison!” It is well grounded, though: The experience in many conferences and publications showed that the literature-lists included many titles about the content of the study, but (nearly) no literature refers to the method and discussion about the value, technique, and pitfalls of international comparison. Often it seems the authors started comparison without knowledge of the long tradition of publications about comparison (“Just doing comparison!”). This repeats mistakes, avoids a deeper quality, and makes these studies less informative than they could be. Moreover, it leaves the author with a foggy feeling: to work with an individual approach instead of assuring him to stand based on known and shared standards.

“Standing on the shoulders” of those, who offered knowledge about content, methods, and reflections helps to strengthen the quality of comparison and make access into this field more enjoyable and easier. Easy access to the literature on standards of international comparative adult education is offered in the publications of the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (www.ISCAE.org/publications).

8. Three promises

Of course, this list of suggestions could be much longer - but it seems a good beginning to apply the presented pieces of advice and suggestions. When going through the seven considerations of this article as a sort of checklist for international comparison in adult education three results can be promised:

Firstly: The quality of the research will be better, more reflected, deeper grounded - more objective, reliable, and valid, contributing to the advancement of the field.

Secondly: At the same time, researchers will feel safer in their arguments, based on the knowledge of shared standards and experiences.

A third result can be promised: The people in the “international arena” are “easy-to-have”-people, who offer friendship and inspiration: Charters/Hilton (1989, 163) describe as a benefit of international meetings “to celebrate the great good fortune of international collegiality”. This growing into an international network enriches the researcher personally and professionally.

Try it!

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International Comparative Adult Education: Seven reflections I expect to read in each study.

Jost Reischmann

Abstract

International comparative adult education has a long history and has developed standards and guidelines. But in the reality of international work researchers often have limited time and resources to go deeper into these methodological reflections, because they only periodically focus on international comparison. The following paper presents seven reflections that could help researchers to raise the quality of their work. Integrating them into research practice contributes to the advancement of international comparative adult education while upholding standards of quality and rigor.

Key words

Adult education, international comparison, research methodology, avoiding pitfalls in international research, quality standards.

Educación internacional comparada de adultos: Siete reflexiones que espero encontrar en cada estudio.

Jost Reischmann

Resumen

La educación internacional comparada de adultos tiene una larga historia y ha desarrollado normas y directrices. Pero en la realidad del trabajo internacional, los investigadores suelen disponer de poco tiempo y recursos limitados para profundizar en estas reflexiones metodológicas, ya que solo se centran periódicamente en la comparación internacional. El siguiente documento presenta siete reflexiones que podrían ayudar a los investigadores a mejorar la calidad de su trabajo. Su integración en la práctica de la investigación contribuye al avance de la educación de adultos comparada a nivel internacional, manteniendo al mismo tiempo los estándares de calidad y rigor.

Palabras clave

Educación de adultos, comparación internacional, metodología de investigación, evitar trampas

L'éducation internationale comparée des adultes : Sept réflexions que je m'attends à lire dans chaque étude.

Jost Reischmann

Résumé

L'éducation des adultes comparée au niveau international a une longue histoire et a développé des normes et des lignes directrices. Mais dans la réalité du travail international, les chercheurs disposent souvent de peu de temps et de ressources pour approfondir ces réflexions méthodologiques, car ils ne se concentrent que périodiquement sur la comparaison internationale. Le document suivant présente sept réflexions qui pourraient aider les chercheurs à améliorer la qualité de leur travail. Leur intégration dans la pratique de la recherche contribue à l'avancement de l'éducation des adultes comparée au niveau international, tout en respectant les normes de qualité et de rigueur.

Mots clés

Éducation des adultes, comparaison internationale, méthodologie de recherche, éviter les pièges de la recherche internationale, normes de qualité

Trayectorias, retos y esperanzas. Educación a lo largo de la vida en el contexto global

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En las últimas, décadas, para extensas capas de la población, la emergencia de una educación que rebasa los límites de la educación inicial es un hecho evidente. La educación se expande entendiéndose como un apoyo de primer orden y para gran cantidad de actividades. Aquella aspiración de una instrucción pública³ inicial que aportara a todos los ciudadanos los saberes básicos indispensables para la vida en sociedad necesita constantes actualizaciones en el campo del trabajo y la tecnología, de la salud, de las relaciones sociales, del desarrollo personal, entre otros. En cualquier caso, el contexto complejo y dinámico en el que vivimos hace que sea difícil hablar de EALV (Educación y Aprendizaje a lo largo de la Vida) como un espacio uniforme. A menudo, las acciones educativas planteadas son ajenas las unas a las otras, inconexas o incluso invisibles e inaccesibles para una buena parte de la población.

Para tratar de aproximarnos a un análisis de la EALV, Inicialmente, pensamos en abordar las *trayectorias, los retos y las esperanzas* de EALV por este orden, pero finalmente decidimos invertir la secuencia empezando por las últimas. Con ello intentamos recuperar el orden con el cual originalmente muchas educadoras y educadores, así como personas jóvenes y adultas, encuadran a la acción educativa a lo largo de la vida.

Pretendemos situar en un lugar preminente el sentido que le damos a la acción educativa. Un sentido que definimos en interacción con el conjunto de la sociedad pero enraizado profundamente con el devenir de la vida cotidiana de las personas implicadas (Gelpi, 2000). Y el sentido tiene que ver con la razón, pero también con la emoción, con el ser individual y social, con una perspectiva

³ Ya preconizada por Condorcet en *La instrucción pública*, cuando propone las bases para una nueva educación en ruptura con el Antiguo Régimen (Condorcet, 2001).

local y global y colectiva, con el ecosistema en el que inserta. Se trata también de visibilizar el carácter político de la educación, de cómo ejercemos una acción que pretende cambiar la sociedad. Y también de apostar por una visión que considere el carácter *sentipensante*⁴ del aprendizaje y de la educación (Fals Borda, 2009).

En segundo lugar, abordaremos los retos y desafíos de la EALV. Si bien la educación, por sí sola, no es capaz de dar una respuesta total a los retos personales y colectivos -o como Paulo Freire defendía: la educación no cambia el mundo-, sí sabemos que permite a las personas y los grupos sociales dotarse de instrumentos eficaces para incidir sobre cuestiones vitales. Es decir: cambia a las personas que van a cambiar el mundo.

Finalmente, trataremos de las trayectorias que pueden obrar en consonancia con estos retos y esperanzas. Trazados que, desde nuestra óptica, deben partir de contextos específicos e implicar a los actores locales. En la era digital sabemos que las redes de conocimientos, las interacciones, las trayectorias son profundamente interdependientes pero esta realidad no está exenta del riesgo de una acción colonizadora o impositiva. Es necesario encontrar la propuesta que permita a cada persona, en su contexto, ejercer al máximo las opciones que permitan un buen vivir.

Recuperar y consensuar el sentido de la vida y de la acción educativa

Hablar de educación es hablar de la condición humana y del apoyo factible y necesario para conseguir las metas personales y colectivas. Es incidir en procesos de transformación: la educación permanente se concibió como un instrumento para impulsar una sociedad más justa, igualitaria y para la mejora de las relaciones y el bien vivir de las personas. Bajo su paraguas también se han acogido propuestas y prácticas que apuntan más al colapso que no a la sostenibilidad, a la dominación que no a la emancipación, a la disgregación que a la inclusión, es decir, más alineadas con la educación bancaria que Freire criticó, frente a una idea de educación liberadora. Por esto, mujeres y hombres comprometidos con la educación propusieron y practicaron la escuela racional de que proponía una educación libre frente a una educación doctrinaria; o los círculos de cultura una educación crítica y transformadora frente a la bancaria; o la educación permanente emancipadora frente a la manipuladora o una educación que lucha contra la explotación de clase, origen cultural o identidad de género. Estas dicotomías que fueron motor de proyectos muy relevantes

⁴ El sociólogo colombiano Orlando Fals Borda nos propone trabajar desde una perspectiva que integre la razón y las emociones.

todavía hoy se nos manifiestan estimulantes, aunque insuficientes. Y para intentar ir más allá tenemos que analizar qué elementos impiden que la educación renuncie a estos impulsos esperanzadores.

Una primera contradicción es que si bien vivimos el momento de máxima expansión de las acciones formativas, éstas más allá de la escuela infantil y juvenil a menudo son prácticamente invisibles. Forman parte de proyectos más generales o se inscriben en un refuerzo colateral de éstos. Así, se asocian a proyectos económicos, culturales o sociales, pero de por sí no tienen presencia en los medios de comunicación ni en los actos sociales que le podrían dar visibilidad. Por ejemplo, se admite que la formación básica de los sectores sociales más necesitados es un elemento básico de inclusividad indispensable para una sociedad integrada, pero los proyectos que se implementan raramente tienen visibilidad social. Nos encontramos lejos todavía de iniciativas que asuman el eslogan los años 90 de la UNESCO de una educación para todas las personas.

Cada departamento, territorio, grupo específico... se enfrenta a las tareas educativas de forma aislada, creando su propia estructura, sus estrategias, sus recursos, muchas veces sin conexión con otras iniciativas que podrían dar continuidad o extensión a la formación. Esta disgregación se justifica, a menudo, por motivos técnicos, por la dinámica social, por falta de recursos, pero esconde una falta de debate social y por lo tanto de la necesaria construcción de un consenso sobre el sentido que debe tener la educación a lo largo de la vida. Se reconoce la necesidad de la educación como un elemento imprescindible en una sociedad compleja y con cambios trepidantes pero a menudo no se dota los proyectos con la inversión de los recursos que razonablemente se necesitarían. Y por ello se convierten más en un ejercicio de propaganda que no en una oportunidad para su implementación.

La ausencia de debate sobre los temas de EALV conlleva que el reparto de los recursos sea desigual, injusto, ordenado por los centros de poder subyacentes de orden económico, político, religioso, de grupos de presión. La investigación en este sector es mínima; la producción de recursos para la práctica escasa; los esfuerzos dedicados a la organización son menores para las personas con bajo poder adquisitivo. Así, necesidades imperiosas para la supervivencia en la sociedad actual resultan inaccesibles para una parte muy importante de la población: conocimientos lingüísticos, técnicos, de comunicación y de relación en una sociedad en la que además de perder vínculos que hay que saber reconstruir, la alfabetización sigue siendo un reto en muchos otros aspectos que no son sólo la lectura o la escritura.

Por otra parte, las acciones de formación están condicionadas por los *resultados*. Y éstos se miden, normalmente, en cifras como número de participantes, certificaciones o grados de satisfacción de los educandos vistos como clientes: la educación como servicio. Los resultados esperados evalúan sobre todo las preferencias de los y las participantes. En raras ocasiones se contempla si la propuesta fue bien formulada, tuvo los recursos adecuados o tuvo en cuenta elementos de contexto que condicionaron su desarrollo. Estos resultados nos remiten a un escenario de competición como señala Licinio Lima se sitúan en marco de la *Pedagogía contra el otro* (Lima, 2019). Se apela a los resultados no para reconocer los logros personales y colectivos, sino para confrontar, seleccionar y clasificar a las personas según su *competencia* para al empleo, o para acceder a beneficios sociales o espacios que son restringidos. Esta pedagogía vuelve a ser un elemento de acomodación acrítica a las dinámicas sociales hegemónicas.

La EALV no puede ser solamente un elemento más de la economía de mercado y en función de la productividad. Se imponen una dinámica de competitividad como como finalidad específica y prioritaria de las acciones educativas.

En plena era digital la brecha que impone la falta de unos conocimientos mínimos se agranda. Si la digitalización pudo haber facilitado el acceso de más personas a la información y al conocimiento vemos que, de hecho, centraliza los procesos. Cada vez tenemos menos posibilidad de contrastar, modular, reorganizar. Ya no sólo la información está empaquetada y es unidireccional sino que se idean sistemas de elaboración de productos culturales en los que domina el dictado de los algoritmos elaborados por unos pocos y no se potencia el intercambio horizontal. Se acaba imponiendo, de facto, una visión que nos aleja de la realidad contrastable. Lo relevante no es lo que elaboramos de forma comunitaria sino lo que los medios y centros de poder repiten con insistencia. En resumen, la sociedad digital, a menudo esconde nuevas formas de dominación. La horizontalidad, creatividad, acceso a la información y al conocimiento que se reconoce como indispensable para las élites se niega en la práctica a la mayor parte de la población.

Hemos cambiado de formas de producir, de relacionarnos, pero en cambio seguimos reproduciendo los moldes de explotación, alienación y extractivismo que ya eran visibles en el siglo XIX. En la formación orientada al mundo del trabajo el valor en auge es el de la *adquisición de competencias*, pero ¿quién establece las competencias necesarias? ¿para qué son necesarias? ¿cómo se evalúan? Las universidades, los centros de investigación y experimentación, también deben ejercer un papel de validación, de propuesta, de apertura más allá del *cientifismo* que se reserva el saber cómo una lectura única de la realidad, como un nuevo oráculo. En una sociedad compleja no podemos permitirnos

lecturas simples, es necesario incorporar una mirada plural, participada, inclusiva.

Resulta imprescindible en este contexto recuperar una mirada abierta, afectuosa, esperanzada y transgresora (Darder, 2021; Hooks, 2021), que nos sitúe de nuevo en una práctica que ofrezca en manos de las ciudadanas y ciudadanos soluciones, instrumentos, opciones a los desafíos actuales. Cabe tener presentes los esfuerzos que ya se han dedicado desde la pedagogía y desde la acción social. Un análisis conformista, acrítico, complaciente, incapacita la acción para conseguir las transformaciones necesarias. La construcción del sentido de la acción socioeducativa es una tarea conjunta y sólo un diálogo abierto y permanente es el camino. En la EALV es una condición indispensable, y debería ser un elemento distintivo que se incorporen los saberes de todos los participantes. Desde la pedagogía popular nos llega el impulso de una pedagogía de la esperanza que, como dice Paulo Freire, no quiere decir conformismo sino una acción radical y comprometida para la transformación social (Freire, 2022).

Perfiles y desafíos: de lo local o lo global a lo glocal

La educación en la vida adulta tiene valor en tanto que abre espacios para la comprensión de la sociedad y para la acción transformadora. La decisión de emprender un nuevo aprendizaje es una opción social que parte de los intereses de las personas, pero también de su relación con el entorno. Los aprendizajes deben permitir el acceso a nuevos espacios de desarrollo, a útiles que son requisitos indispensables para el trabajo, la salud, la cultura y la relaciones. Los procesos formativos acompañan las trayectorias y abren esperanzas para enfrentarse a los desafíos de cada momento y cada entorno. La educación se focaliza en dar respuesta a retos específicos, pero no puede perder de vista la perspectiva global e interconectada. Así entendida, la práctica educativa es una propuesta que introducirá cambios sustanciales en la vida de las personas y en el conjunto de la sociedad.

Aprender significa introducir nuevas perspectivas y posibilidades que pueden cambiar las relaciones de poder, y esto puede resultar incómodo si el objetivo es mantener las dinámicas predominantes. Se apela, entonces, a la necesidad de que la educación no sea ideológica; o que sea neutra, pero sabemos que la educación tiene siempre un componente político que en absoluto debe ser adoctrinador o manipulador. El primer reto es plantear una educación que responda a los intereses de los participantes y al bien común del conjunto de la sociedad o el entorno concreto.

En una sociedad en la que son evidentes las desigualdades sociales (clase, etnia, género y sus intersecciones,) la gran pregunta como educadoras y educadores y como ciudadanos de esta sociedad es: ¿qué contribución puede hacer la educación para reducir estas las desigualdades y configurar un orden más justo? Esta tarea no es exclusiva de la acción educativa, pero la educación no puede quedar al margen de la justicia social. Superar la desigualdad sólo va a ser posible desde una conciencia crítica y responsable pero no sólo de los sectores menos favorecidos sino del conjunto de la sociedad. La educación para superar la desigualdad debe inscribirse en un proyecto social que implique a todos los sectores sociales a nivel político, social, económico, cultural, técnico, religioso o comunicacional.

Es imprescindible una formación lingüística, técnica y cultural de base para todas las personas, pero también una formación que mueva la conciencia crítica en el conjunto de la población y a cada persona según su responsabilidad. No es posible promover una economía solidaria sin el encuentro con el mundo de la empresa y el financiero. Como tampoco lo es sin un sistema social organizado para el bien común y no para el lucro de unos pocos.

Las propuestas educativas siempre forman parte de un proyecto social y es acompañando a este proyecto social que pueden alcanzar su máximo potencial. Si éste responde a una cultura depredadora (McLaren, 1997), autoritaria, manipuladora la educación crítica tan incómoda para algunos sectores como necesaria para el conjunto de la sociedad. El intento para potenciar una educación que nos permita superar la desigualdad no puede ser sólo de los implicados. El reto es, por tanto, encontrar nexos, conexiones, recursos compartidos con los sectores sociales comprometidos con una sociedad sin la hiriente desigualdad que hoy podemos observar incluso en los entornos más desarrollados. Las respuestas fáciles a menudo enmascaran intereses particulares, nos encontramos con entornos de gran complejidad. De la misma forma que no se puede hacer un análisis maniqueo y sustentar las opciones sobre el mismo, la acción educativa debe hacer posible en su propio espacio el encuentro entre iguales. La concepción, el desarrollo y la proyección de los espacios, tiempos, contenidos, recursos ya establece dinámicas de equidad o de segregación. No hay excusas para intentar que el espacio educativo elimine una concepción que se basa en la superioridad de los educadores respecto a los educandos, la cultura académica respecto a la cultura popular, que imponga un orden patriarcal o de exclusión por razones de género u origen social o cultural. Es necesario romper los moldes que nos sujetan a inercias o intereses que van en esta dirección. Ésta es una tarea colectiva que si no la abordamos, equivale a mantener las desigualdades.

Los cambios que han afectado a la sociedad en las últimas décadas son materiales, pero también culturales. La precariedad laboral ha sumido a una parte importante de la sociedad en esa nueva clase social que es el precariado (Standing, 2014), y que nos conduce a asumir no sólo peores trabajos sino peores condiciones de vida. La mass-mediatización de la sociedad y la sociedad del espectáculo han invadido nuestras vidas y nuestra intimidad; además de aislarnos de los demás con nuestros dispositivos electrónicos, muchos (y no sólo los más jóvenes) se exhiben constantemente, en una sociedad en la que lo importante ya no es ser, ni tampoco tener o acumular, como criticó Eric Fromm (2009) hace décadas, sino parecer (Debord, 2000). Cada vez es más difícil que una persona joven o adulta pueda plantearse un proyecto de vida en unas sociedades líquidas (Bauman, 2003) en las que se han naturalizado el riesgo y la incertidumbre para la mayoría (Beck, 1998).

La forma de pensar de cada tiempo histórico también es social, cultural. Hoy, pensamiento, cultura y valores atravesados por la racionalidad capitalista: el homo oeconomicus. El individualismo niega nuestro componente social. Impone un consumismo, como diría Loris Viviani (2012); la McDonalización de la sociedad (Ritzer, 1996) hasta el punto de mercantilizar también la formación, la sanidad, la cultura y las relaciones. Una dinámica que nos empuja al narcisismo, la cosificación, dictadura de la imagen y la ruptura con la naturaleza: límites biofísicos, expectativas basadas en las condiciones naturales evidentes, ... Y también las relaciones de poder desiguales entre mercado, estado y sociedad civil, en las que el primero va colonizando espacios de lo público y lo común.

El proyecto social, en el que se inscribe la acción pedagógica, incide tanto en los ecosistemas locales como en las relaciones a nivel planetario. Es cada día más evidente la crisis ecológica y climática y, sin embargo, hacemos oídos sordos a muchos de los indicadores. Desde la ecopedagogía (Gutiérrez y Prado, 2015) se propone incorporar una perspectiva ambiental. Se deben estudiar las bases y procedimientos para ver cómo conseguir una acción humana, también la educativa que no nos conduzca al colapso⁵. La educación debe calibrar el impacto de los recursos utilizados, una relación equilibrada con el entorno. El

⁵ Eudald Carbonell, entrevista en la revista *Crític* (2022) con motivo de la presentación de su último libro, *El futuro de la humanidad*: "La extinción es poco probable, pero el colapso es un hecho. No nos queda otra que cambiar la forma de organizarnos, porque el capitalismo no está sirviendo para dar respuesta a ninguno de los cuatro grandes problemas que tenemos como especie". Recuperado de: <https://www.elcritic.cat/entrevistes/eudald-carbonell-lextincio-es-poc-probable-pero-el-col-lapse-es-un-fet-149613>

reto es constituir espacios de aprendizaje que a su vez potencien valores en consonancia con la sostenibilidad.

También, en momentos de crisis, en los que se perciben amenazas inmediatas y de gran impacto, el auge de propuestas autoritarias encuentra el campo abonado. En este contexto, el espacio que no ocupa una educación crítica, consciente, transformadora, comprometida con el bien común es ocupado por dinámicas educativas doctrinarias y excluyentes y dan paso a acciones de educación formal, no formal o informal que de manera más o menos sutil, hacen de los contenidos manipulados, unidireccionales, excluyentes, el centro de su discurso. Éste enraíza con aspiraciones legítimas de la ciudadanía, pero que sólo sirven a intereses particulares. Tenemos que decidir colectivamente si deseamos formular una pedagogía profundamente democrática o dejar que otras perspectivas se instauren como hegemónicas. También en los contextos de una democracia formal actúan como pantalla para esconder que dinámicas impositivas, coloniales. Democratizar la educación significa dar voz a todos los agentes y consensuar las líneas de acción prioritarias.

El conflicto forma parte de la realidad humana y social, y constituye un reto para la educación asumirlo, y construir herramientas y buscar trayectorias que permitan manejarlo. La crisis permanente y los malestares que conlleva explican algunos de los problemas que se nos presentan el momento actual: desde la salud mental, a determinados resultados electorales con el auge de la extrema derecha autoritaria y sus consecuencias políticas tanto para la sociedad como para la educación.

También pensamos que es necesario replantear nuestra manera de entender el conocimiento, superando la ceguera del conocimiento que nos apunta Edgar Morin (1999), al tiempo que nos propone los saberes que debemos incorporar para responder a los nuevos retos y escenarios con los que nos encontramos. Forma parte de los desafíos actuales también conseguir una dinámica relacional que integre las diferentes identidades. Tenemos que hablar del cambio profundo en el que la educación puede jugar un papel clave respecto a la identidad sexual y a todas las interacciones que se dan en torno a los roles de género. La violencia hacia las mujeres y en función de la orientación sexual es una asignatura pendiente y un reto imprescindible en toda acción educativa a lo largo de la vida.

Por último, es necesario también poner en el foco la propia individualidad, la corporeidad, el carácter biológico de todas las personas. Somos cada vez más conscientes de los problemas de salud y también de salud mental que van asociados a nuestro modo de vida capitalista y consumista. Hay que diseñar

estrategias de prevención y de tratamiento, pero los espacios educativos pueden ser espacios privilegiados para configurar desde lo dialógico formas de vida que permitan superar la pandemia de la salud mental.

Trayectorias y propuestas

La práctica de la EALV se encuentra a nivel global ante una encrucijada: si responde a los trayectos prediseñados, no responde a los desafíos que la sociedad tiene planteados y puede contribuir a aumentar la brecha de desigualdad, así como la crisis relacional, ecológica y de identidad. Pero para formular otras propuestas es necesaria la confluencia con sectores sociales fragmentados y con dinámicas muchas veces divergentes.

La educación como institución social, la escuela y el sistema educativo están pensados para ser un puntal del sistema social. Pero una educación orientada exclusivamente a satisfacer las necesidades del mercado laboral ahonda aún más la crisis planetaria en lugar de contribuir a necesarias transformaciones. Una EALV es imprescindible para cambiar/transformar la sociedad, pero debe ir más allá de lo meramente institucional. Es necesario superar dicotomía entre público/privado: la comunidad y los movimientos sociales también educan... ¿Qué podemos aprender de las buenas experiencias que en los últimos años han servido para mejorar la vida de las personas desde el ámbito social o del tercer sector? El capital de aportaciones lo encontramos en el campo de iniciativas en el campo del asociacionismo cultural, en grupos de ayuda mutua, en la producción cooperativa y solidaria, entre muchas otras. Espacios y prácticas desde los que aprender.

Es necesaria una educación para dar valor a lo que hoy no lo tiene: la vida, los cuidados. Si la EALV se piensa desde una óptica exclusivamente mercantil y para favorecer los intereses de grandes grupos económicos o de poder estamos perpetuando un sesgo que no soluciona los grandes retos que tiene la sociedad actual ni siquiera los que se refieren a la propia producción.

Sin duda encontramos en muchos lugares experiencias relevantes desde la base, que parten de la apropiación colectiva y la cultura popular, que hay que tener en cuenta, muchas de ellas en la educación informal. También debemos aprender del feminismo: sin los trabajos esenciales que las mujeres y han hecho siempre y una visión del mundo alejada del modelo patriarcal, el mundo no se sostiene. Nos sumamos también al reencuentro con el entorno, a la práctica de una educación ecosocial. Estas experiencias transformadoras han de ser capaces de crear entre ellas alianzas que aprovechen las sinergias y potencien la acción de cada una de ellas.

Cada proyecto local debe permitir dar sentido a las cosas, y a la vida. Y al mismo tiempo buscar las confluencias que permitan proyectar la educación como un continuo que impulsa y da apoyo para responder a los retos que se plantean.

El espacio educativo tiene sentido como escuela de diálogo crítico y recreación de conocimientos que nos permitan una acción transformadora. Sin diálogo no hay educación, sólo tenemos un callejón sin salida. Más allá de un aprendizaje dialógico que nos enseñe a escuchar(nos) y que permita aprovechar todas las aportaciones y perspectivas sólo tenemos el adoctrinamiento y la manipulación.

Una educación que reconozca los saberes que trae todo el mundo... la diversidad en todos los sentidos, empezando por el conocimiento de los demás: aprender a construir convivencia desde el reconocimiento mutuo. Uno de los factores de pérdida de sentido es por ejemplo la ruptura entre generaciones, y aquí la EALV puede ser un elemento conector si es capaz de encontrar el diálogo entre los saberes de las diferentes generaciones y de la diversidad en conjunto.

Hablamos de trayectorias porque todo lo que estamos apuntando se debe traducir en acción y no quedarse en pura retórica. Y para ello es necesario visibilizar todo lo que ya se está haciendo buscar nuevas confluencias, diseñar recursos de acción recíproca que abarquen desde la concepción de la acción educativa hasta su evaluación y reformulación.

La EALV debe tener como meta conseguir una vida digna para todos, lo que significa no sólo disponer de unas mínimas condiciones materiales, sino el sueño de potenciar una buena vida para todas las personas.

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Trayectorias, retos y esperanzas. Educación a lo largo de la vida en el contexto global

Ángel Marzo y David Abril

Resumen

En este texto los autores reflexionan sobre las trayectorias, retos y esperanzas de la Educación a lo Largo de la Vida (EALV) desde el contexto español, pero desde una mirada “glocal”. Se hace autocrítica sobre las tendencias dominantes en la EALV y se sitúa la construcción de sentido en conexión con la pedagogía de Paulo Freire como una oportunidad para el desarrollo de una educación crítica y transformadora que responda a los retos y desafíos de la actual etapa de la globalización. Se propone revisar las pedagogías hegemónicas y la acción educativa en los proyectos y contextos en los que se desarrolla la EALV, tomando como referencia para el aprendizaje las experiencias de los movimientos sociales como la economía social y el feminismo, apostando por una educación dialógica que otorgue valor a los cuidados y sirva a la búsqueda de una “buena vida” para todos.

Palabras clave

Educación a lo Largo de la Vida (EALV), Paulo Freire, pedagogías críticas, perspectiva glocal, ecopedagogía

Trajectories, challenges and hopes. Lifelong learning in the global context

Ángel Marzo y David Abril

Abstract

In this text the authors discuss about the trajectories, challenges and hopes of Lifelong Learning from the Spanish context, but from a “glocal” perspective. Self-criticism is made about the dominant trends in Lifelong Learning practises and the construction of meaning is considered -in connection with Paulo Freire’s pedagogy- as an opportunity for the development of a critical and transformative education that responds to the challenges of the current stage of the Globalization. It is proposed to review the hegemonic pedagogies and educational action in the projects and contexts in which Lifelong Learning strategies and activities are implemented, taking as a reference for learning the experiences of social movements such as social economy and feminism, defending a dialogic education that gives value to care and the search for a “good life” for all.

Key words

Lifelong Education (EALV), Paulo Freire, critical pedagogies, glocal perspective, ecopedagogy.

Trajectoires, défis et espoirs. L'apprentissage tout au long de la vie dans un contexte mondial

Ángel Marzo y David Abril

Résumé

Dans ce texte, les auteurs discutent des trajectoires, des défis et des espoirs de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie dans le contexte espagnol, mais dans une perspective "glocale". Une autocritique est faite sur les tendances dominantes dans les pratiques d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie et la construction du sens est considérée - en relation avec la pédagogie de Paulo Freire - comme une opportunité pour le développement d'une éducation critique et transformatrice qui répond aux défis de l'étape actuelle de la mondialisation. Il est proposé de revoir les pédagogies hégémoniques et l'action éducative dans les projets et les contextes où les stratégies et les activités d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie sont mises en œuvre, en prenant comme référence pour l'apprentissage les expériences des mouvements sociaux tels que l'économie sociale et le féminisme, et en défendant une éducation dialogique qui donne de la valeur aux soins et à la recherche d'une "bonne vie" pour tous.

Mots-clés

Éducation tout au long de la vie (EALV), Paulo Freire, pédagogies critiques, perspective globale, écopédagogie

Global challenges and adult learnings for better futures: some reflections

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Introduction

The World is Burning. This was the title of an Adult Education programme for Active Citizenship organised by a Danish Folk High School in the early 2000s. Yet it applies well to describe today's world as characterised by local as much as transnational challenges that put the planet and its inhabitants at risk and where existing democratic regimes are questioned by raising populist and anti-democratic initiatives and warfare attitudes.

Besides Hamas' assault on Israel on 7th October 2023, the Israeli response, and the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, in November 2023, there were more than 110 armed conflicts worldwide, as monitored by the Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights: 45 in the Middle East and North Africa, 35 in the rest of Africa, 21 in Asia, 7 in Europe, and 6 in Latin America.

Against this backdrop, it is worth recalling the question posed at the London conference of 1945 by the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee: "Do not all wars begin in the minds of men [sic!]?". The UNESCO Constitution represented a utopian response, recognising the role education, science, and culture can play in changing people's minds.

This paper questions how adult education can help change people's minds for better and more peaceful futures. While a comprehensive response is not possible, in this paper, I will argue that there is a fundamental need to re-state the social purpose of adult education when looking at its global future.

First, I consider a few poignant challenges of the present. While I acknowledge that climate change is no doubt crucial, other challenges have attracted my attention and are on focus here. Specifically: 1) the rise of populism and anti-democratic trends, 2)

the emergence of post-truth, with the spread of fake news and alternative facts, and 3) the pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence and conversational agents.

Against this backdrop, I consider a few types of learning that adults need to engage with to live with such challenges while hopefully building better and more peaceful futures. These learnings encompass global citizenship, digital citizenship, and handling Artificial Intelligence.

Finally, I consider how adult education is framed by current international policies and the challenges faced by adult education policy at the national level. Here, I draw on a *Research Handbook on Adult Education Policy* (Milan, Rasmussen and Bussi, forthcoming) that comprises analyses by several colleagues from Europe, the Americas, Africa, and India. On this ground, I conclude with the need to re-state the social purpose of adult education for future policies to help support the kind of learning mentioned above.

Populism and anti-democratic trends

Undoubtedly, populism has gained traction worldwide from the Americas to Europe and is a global phenomenon that permeates the media accounts of contemporary politics as much as public debates and private experiences. Yet populism remains an ambiguous term. As Mouffe (2016) notes, it cannot be said to be an ideology or a political regime. It has no programmatic content either and can take many forms – so has historically and in contemporary democratic regimes. Nonetheless, it is “a way of doing politics” through collective action to question the status quo and the power held by the majority (Ibid.).

Accordingly, and independently from its ideological connotation, for Urbinati (2019, p. 111), ‘populism in power’ is radically partial, as it:

...consists in a transmutation of the democratic principles of the majority and the people in a way that is meant to celebrate one subset of the people as opposed to another through a leader embodying it and an audience legitimizing it.

This can well affect democratic regimes as it impacts their institutions, the rule of law, and the division of powers in constitutional democracies, which, in turn, can lead to authoritarian regimes or dictatorships.

For these reasons, scholars seem to agree that populism has a solid link to democracy, and to stress their symbiosis, some radicals see populism as a ‘parasite of democracy’ (Arditi, 2007). Yet, Urbinati (2019, p. 118) draws an interesting distinction between

populism 'as a movement of opinion', which is oppositional but does not put democracy at risk, and populism 'as a movement that strives to become a ruling power within the state'. In other words, while populism is not an antidemocratic movement per se, when a ruling power vandalises the democratic principles of the majority and the people as it "construct[s] new forms of popular sovereignty that enhance partial inclusiveness, which exists at the expense of democracy as majority/opposition" (Ibid. 124).

Post-trust, fake news, and alternative facts

Paralleling the traction of populism, several observers claim we live in a post-truth world (e.g., McIntyre, 2018; Sim, 2019). The ample use of alternative narratives of facts in politics, the media, and social interactions corroborates this. Facts – what can be proved to have happened – are ignored by alternative narratives that are often accompanied by the mystification of science and circulate through traditional and new media, thanks to the expansion of, and accessibility to, social media. Accordingly, fake news is created and distributed, affecting how people feel and understand the world. Put bluntly, fake news, alternative narratives, and the feeling these can arouse often acquire more weight than evidence of what happened.

Post-truth has been supported and well served by the expansion of communication technologies, with the possibility to instantly transmit a message to vast audiences, who will then pass it to their networks through social media. Several studies have analysed, for instance, the travelling of fake versus real news through social media like Twitter (now X), showing how receivers tend to re-share fake news more than actual news (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

While facts and events can be interpreted from different viewpoints or reported differently, the nature of the evidence on which interpretations can be proposed is not to be questioned. Yet, post-truth refers to the assertion of ideological supremacy that individuals, groups, or institutions exert to force others to believe in something independently of the evidence (McIntyre 2018). For Sim (2019), this fundamentally changes the political debate and questions the use of reason in the public sphere, which needs defending.

The pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence and conversational agents

Finally, Artificial Intelligence (AI) – which also supports the creation and circulation of fake news – has become a pervasive element of human life. Especially conversational agents – software that interacts with humans by natural language in speech, like virtual assistants, or text, like chatbots (Gnewuch, Mo-rana, & Mädche, 2017; McTear, Callejas, & Griol, 2016) – are now widely applied by public and private services. Many

adults engage in conversations with such agents in their everyday life – consciously or unconsciously – when asking for assistance from their energy or electricity company, mobile or internet provider, or when planning a trip for business or pleasure, to mention a few examples. But some conversational agents can also assist humans in generating novel text and images thanks to so-called ‘generative’ AI technologies.

Generative AI technologies introduced far-reaching changes in how humans enter a conversation with machines (or software) and are well described by Gimpel and colleagues (2023) as a nested conception. At a higher level of abstraction is *AI*, encompassing all techniques and approaches to make machines capable of acting in an environment. *Machine learning* (ML) allows computers (or software) to learn and improve on a specific task by identifying patterns and predictions based on algorithms applied to input data. Now, generative AI, typically using ML, can generate new data or outputs in the form of text, images, or music. Large language models (LLMs) are a specific ML model capable of processing and generating natural language text. In other words, LLMs are *generative AI* that can produce novel outputs in the form of text, applying algorithmic patterns to learn from a large amount of input data. Therefore, *conversational agents* are generative AI that can enter natural language conversations with people and use LLMs to generate text mimicking human-like language and style.

ChatGPT by OpenAI (first released in 2018) is an excellent example of a LLM-based conversational agent. However, other conversational agents also exist that use, for instance, *text-to-image* (TTI) models and can convert text prompts generated by humans into novel images, like DALL E 2 (also by OpenAI) or Stable Diffusion (by Stability).

The sophistication of AI technologies, especially when considering conversational agents, is expected to increase with time. While some fear they will replace humans, others insist they are still trained on large but limited input data. Hence, their learning could be better, and they cannot capture the nuances or precision of a human conversation (Azaria, 2022). Undoubtedly, conversational agents present some advantages – for example, they are often permanently available and accessible from multiple locations (Hobert, 2019). Yet not only do they have limits, but they also present risks that people should be fully aware of when conversing with them.

Today, an increasing number of adults are making use of generative AI technologies in their study or profession (including adult teachers and educators) but are often unaware of the underlying LLMs and the limits of generative AI technologies or do not adequately consider the risks such technologies pose from an ethical point of view. At the same time, a large pocket of the adult population ignores or fears generative AI technologies and, therefore, does not benefit from the potential advantages these could bring to improve, for instance, their study or working performance.

Learnings for the future

Considering the global challenges illustrated thus far – namely populism and anti-democratic trends, post-truth, fake news and alternative facts, and the pervasiveness of AI and conversational agents – there are different types of learning that adults need to live with such challenges while building better futures for all. Here, I restrict attention to global citizenship, digital citizenship, and dealing with AI.

Global citizenship encompasses learning *for* and *of* global citizenship. Adult learning *for* global citizenship is what allows the acquisition of citizenship values, understanding, perceptions and skills that are global and non-parochial, for instance, through the active involvement of adult learners in international exchange programs or collaborative online international learning experiences, or what stimulates adult agency and change in knowledge, awareness, and lifestyle, with the goal to promoting collective change. Adult learning *of* global citizenship is what occurs, for instance, through activism or participation in coordinated political actions to strive for a more just society at the global level.

Reconciling learning *of* and *for* global citizenship from a humanist and social-justice-oriented perspective, Jenkins (2021) proposes a model for ‘Ecological global citizenship education’, which is centred around a dialogue between individual and collective learning pedagogies to promote critical thinking, cognitive, affective, and transformative learning through critical pedagogies, collaborative and community learning practices. Meanwhile, Milana & Tarozzi (2021) conceptualise adult education and global citizenship learning as ‘interlocked conceptions’ and propose a Four-dimensions approach encompassing aims (what for), contents and skills (what), processes and pedagogies (how), actors and learning environments (who).

Aims (what for) concern the purposes of adult education or what represents educationally desirable goals in terms of global social justice. Adult education and learning as global citizenship education aim to empower learners to engage and assume active roles at local and global levels. But with the aspiration of addressing global challenges and becoming proactive contributors to a more just, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world.

Contents and skills (what) encompass the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural learning domains of global citizenship education, which need to be translated into learning outputs to guide the planning of intentional processes (education) by institutions, professionals, or volunteers aimed at adult learners, should also cover active citizenship skills to foster participation and public engagement.

Processes and pedagogies (how) cover the political and practical processes involved in translating statements of principle and policy recommendations into genuine pedagogies, teaching methods, and learning activities. Accordingly, transformative pedagogies, in line with the social purpose of adult education, are crucial to bringing about personal and social change through experience and action.

Finally, *actors and learning environments (who)* denote the active engagement of multiple institutions and stakeholders in promoting global citizenship learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts in which adults engage.

In short, recognising that adult education and global citizenship are ‘interlocked’ supports democracy and helps intersect, as Torres and Dorio (2015, p. 5) put it, “individual development as a participatory process with sustainable development and peace education fostered by a model of global commons.”

Digital citizenship involves learning to engage with digital technologies to responsibly participate in local, national, and global communities at all levels (political, economic, social, and cultural) and in defence of human rights and dignity (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017). It can be part of global citizenship learning when it encompasses the acquisition of knowledge needed to utilise digital tools and new media consciously and responsibly, but also critical thinking that can make adults sensitive towards potential risks and to contrasting hate speech. Therefore, digital citizenship learning brings together digital literacy – the ability to use the internet, new information and communication technologies – with media literacy – the capacity to access, analyse, build, and assess messages across different media, but it is more than that.

Dealing with AI calls for complex thinking. Yet, restricting attention to conversational agents, adults need to familiarise themselves with and learn how to use them best (see Milana, Brandi, Hodge, & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2024). For instance, Gimpel and colleagues (2023) suggest several areas in which generative AI technologies could benefit university students that are equally relevant for adults using conversational agents in different learning environments or for their professions. First, conversational agents – like ChatGPT – necessitate adequate prompts to generate valuable results. Producing such prompts, as much as evaluating the quality of the results, requires adults to logically organise and categorise information in a coherent way, hence helping structure their thinking (Ibid.). Second, multiple iterations with conversational agents can help refine the process of, e.g., novel text or code generation, but also to use conversational agents in a more instrumental way, e.g., to summarise – rather than produce novel – text (Ibid.). In short, following these authors, adult learners may think of conversational agents as ‘partners’ in creating text (but the same could be said for creating images). This, however, implies that adults are aware that conversational agents cannot hold responsibility for the results they produce and that such results

may not be updated, trustworthy or accurate (Atlas, 2023). In fact, one of the biases of conversational agents is the loss of connection between the information it provides and its source. Therefore, the results of any prompt need adult learners or professionals to verify their correctness and to look for valid sources of the information they contain.

Adult education policy: international framing and national challenges

Thus far, I have considered the rise of populism and anti-democratic trends, the emergence of post-truth, the spread of fake news and alternative facts, and the pervasiveness of AI among the poignant challenges of the present. Accordingly, I have been arguing for adult education to support global citizenship learning, digital citizenship learning, and learning to deal with AI to cope with these challenges. Yet the question of what kind of public policies may support such learning remains open.

At the international level, attention to adult education is on the rise if we consider the UNESCO *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* ratified in 2015 (UNESCO, 2015), the increased monitoring of policy developments in this field by the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning through the five *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) published to date, and the 2022 commitment to the *Marrakesh Framework for Action* at CONFINTEA VII.

The UNESCO Recommendation expands attention from the intentional organisation of learning experiences that education represents and includes the results of such experiences: learning. Hence, it considers the education and learning of adults as ‘a core component’ of learning experiences that are lifelong and lifewide, and ‘a building block’ of a learning society. This concept is inherently linked to the economic development of nations. As Peter Jarvis (2000) reminded us well before the 2015 Recommendation, a learning society is *futuristic* as it depends on technological advances; is *societal*, as it aims for the betterment of societies through economic growth and democratic citizenship engagement; it is *reflexive*, as learning should enable adaptation to change and flexibility; and finally, it is a *global market* where education and learning become commodities!

Now the *Marrakesh Framework for Action* recognises the ‘long-term structural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic’, the threats to societies “by rising fanaticism and violent extremism, growing distrust in science and rising inequalities within and between countries” (MFA, p. 1-3), reiterates the need for ‘gender equality and the rights of all’, and affirms adult education and learning as a fundamental human right, thus framing education as a public endeavour and a common good.

Paralleling these global framings of adult education, in Europe, education has been seen as an essential element of the European integration project (Hingel, 2001; Milana, 2023). This opened the door for a slow but steady formation of adult learning as a fully-fledged policy domain at the European level (Milana & Klatt, 2019), influenced by labour, economic and social concerns. Hence, the Council of the EU first agreed upon a European Agenda on adult learning following the 2010 Eurozone Crisis (CEU, 2011) and renewed during the COVID-19 pandemic (CEU, 2021).

A comparison of the Council's beliefs on adult learning that crystallised in these ten-year agendas reveals how the normative assumptions on adult learning have moved from the realm of the 'possible' – i.e., targeted adult learning could support economic progress – in response to the 2010 Eurozone Crisis, to that of the 'certitude' – i.e., at certain conditions adult learning produces positive outcomes –, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Milana & Mikulec, forthcoming). Having traced the evolution of these policies through phases of EU development and critical junctures such as the 2008 economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, Bussi and Milana (forthcoming) argue that the trajectory of these policies has had a dominant economic orientation, with incremental changes that invested in skills for work more urgent and pressing over time.

In short, under different ideational frameworks, governments are increasingly committing themselves to support expanding adult education in Europe as much as globally. But another picture emerges when we consider adult education policy within the same countries that signed those commitments.

In several countries, adult education holds a weak position in policy agendas, which nonetheless privilege an economistic logic (Torres, 2013), as do much of European policies, and contribute to, rather than solve, inequalities.

For instance, in Eastern Europe, Kopecký, Šerák and Sycha (forthcoming) point out that as part of Czech national education policy, adult education has had a marginal position since the 1990s and argue that especially social changes framed by post-communist transformation, a neoliberal turn, and the Europeanisation process that followed the country access to the EU in 2004, contributed to assigning peripheral and instrumental roles to adult education. Meanwhile, Popović and Maksimović (forthcoming) consider that hybrid political regimes developed in the post-communist world have shaped adult education policy. Speaking of Serbia, a hybrid political regime characterised by democratic structures and authoritarian practices, they argue for a discrepancy between the adult education policy documents presented in public and to other countries – e.g., to attract funding – and policy implementation.

In Central Europe, Stephanus and Vero (forthcoming) point out that in France re-skilling has become essential to secure worker career paths, meeting labour market shortages and supporting the green and digital transitions, but show that low-skilled workers benefit less than other social groups from the implementation of re-skilling programs; whereas in Belgium (i.e., the Walloon Region), for the past two decades, as Conter (forthcoming) argues, the dominant political discourse has made individuals responsible for their employability, while training programmes target individuals before entering or after leaving employment but not those in occupations.

In the Americas, examining the U.S. federal policy for adult basic education, Belzer (forthcoming) argues that a neoliberal agenda promotes it single-mindedly as a driver of individual and social economic benefit; this means that less tangible benefits of improved foundational skills ‘do not count’. Whereas in Mexico, as Hernández Flores, Campero Cuenca and Mendez Puga (forthcoming) note, despite a reformed legal framework for youth and adult education, governance remains challenging for designing and implementing actual provision.

In India, while ideas and objectives of national adult education policy have often drawn on international guidelines and resources, as Singh (forthcoming) argues, a lack of political will among national stakeholders has been a persistent challenge to its implementation.

Lastly, in French-speaking African countries, according to Biao (forthcoming), the low priority given to adult education by the former colonial power, France, still affects adult education policy.

Conclusion

The above review of national adult education policies points to the fact that while some countries still focus primarily on adult literacy, often this focus co-exists with a stronger emphasis on training provision to meet work and labour market needs rather than individual and societal demand. These concerns seem to ignore either the rise of populism and anti-democratic trends, the emergence of post-truth, the spread of fake news and alternative facts, or the pervasiveness of AI among the poignant challenges of the present. By contrast, for public policy to envision a kind of adult education that supports global citizenship learning, digital citizenship learning, and learning to deal with AI to cope with these challenges, policymakers should give full recognition that adult education has an inherently social purpose. Hence, re-stating the social purpose of adult education calls for advocating – on the part of civil society and academia – for better policies that frame adult education as providing adult learners with “knowledge that they can use collectively to change society [...] or challenge social inequalities and injustices” (Fieldhouse, 1992, p. 11), to promote community

development (Brookfield, 1987; Freire, 1970), and to allow the formation of a type of citizenship that embraces cultural diversity and pluralism (Johnston, 1999).

If war begins in the minds of men – and women – a peaceful coexistence requires a different nourishment of people's minds. While populism and post-truth tend to divide and radicalise people by making the use of reason in the public sphere obsolete, and AI supports all this, by contrast, educating adults on how to deal with AI and act as digital and global citizens can challenge inequalities and injustices and promote collectively social change.

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Global challenges and adult learnings for better futures: some reflections

Marcella Milana

Abstract

Local and transnational challenges put the planet and its inhabitants at risk while existing democratic regimes are questioned by raising populist and anti-democratic initiatives and warfare attitudes. In this article, I interrogate how adult education can help change people's minds for better and more peaceful futures, limiting attention to a few poignant challenges of

the present: 1) the rise of populism and anti-democratic trends, 2) the emergence of post-truth, and 3) the pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence and conversational agents. I then consider a few types of learning (global citizenship, digital citizenship, and dealing with Artificial Intelligence) that adults need to engage with to live with such challenges while hopefully building better and more peaceful futures. Finally, I consider how adult education is framed by current international policies and the challenges faced by adult education policy at the national level. In short, I argue for a fundamental need to re-state the social purpose of adult education for future policies to help support the learning above-mentioned.

Keywords

adult education, global citizenship, digital citizenship, artificial intelligence, social purpose

Défis mondiaux et apprentissage des adultes pour un avenir meilleur : quelques réflexions

Marcella Milana

Résumé

Les défis locaux et transnationaux mettent en péril la planète et ses habitants, tandis que les régimes démocratiques existants sont remis en question par l'émergence d'initiatives populistes et antidémocratiques ainsi que d'attitudes belliqueuses. Dans cet article, je m'interroge sur la manière dont l'éducation des adultes peut contribuer à changer les mentalités en vue d'un avenir meilleur et plus pacifique, en me concentrant sur quelques défis marquants du présent : 1) la montée du populisme et des tendances antidémocratiques, 2) l'émergence de la post-vérité et 3) l'omniprésence de l'intelligence artificielle et des agents conversationnels. Ensuite, j'examine plusieurs types d'apprentissage (citoyenneté mondiale, citoyenneté numérique et maîtrise de l'intelligence artificielle) que les adultes doivent acquérir pour relever ces défis tout en aspirant à construire des futurs meilleurs et plus pacifiques. Enfin, je discute du cadre de l'éducation des adultes dans le contexte des politiques internationales actuelles et des défis auxquels sont confrontées les politiques d'éducation des adultes au niveau national. En conclusion, je plaide en faveur d'une nécessité fondamentale de réexaminer l'objectif social de l'éducation des adultes afin que les politiques futures soutiennent l'apprentissage susmentionné.

Mots-clés

éducation des adultes, citoyenneté mondiale, citoyenneté numérique, intelligence artificielle, objectif social

Desafíos mundiales y aprendizaje de adultos para un futuro mejor: algunas reflexiones

Marcella Milana

Resumen

Los desafíos locales y transnacionales ponen en peligro al planeta y a sus habitantes, mientras que los regímenes democráticos existentes se ven cuestionados por el aumento de iniciativas populistas y antidemocráticas y de actitudes belicistas. En este artículo, me planteo cómo la educación de adultos puede contribuir a cambiar la mentalidad de las personas en pro de futuros mejores y más pacíficos, centrándome en algunos desafíos conmovedores del presente: 1) el auge del populismo y las tendencias antidemocráticas, 2) la aparición de la posverdad y 3) la omnipresencia de la inteligencia artificial y los agentes conversacionales. A continuación, examino algunos tipos de aprendizaje (ciudadanía global, ciudadanía digital y manejo de la inteligencia artificial) que los adultos necesitan para enfrentar estos retos y, al mismo tiempo, construir un futuro mejor y más pacífico. Por último, considero cómo se enmarca la educación de adultos en las actuales políticas internacionales y los retos a los que se enfrenta la política de educación de adultos a nivel nacional. En resumen, defiendo la necesidad fundamental de replantear la finalidad social de la educación de adultos para que las políticas futuras contribuyan a apoyar el aprendizaje antes mencionado.

Palabras clave

educación de adultos, ciudadanía global, ciudadanía digital, inteligencia artificial, finalidad social

The Polycrisis and Adult Education Futures: The Transformative Work of Relationality

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Land Acknowledgements

I need to be true to where I live. As part of the practice of truth and reconciliation in what is now called Canada and as part of decolonial futures, I acknowledge that I am settler of Eastern Germanic origins who grew up in the traditional lands of the Plains Cree in Treaty 8 territory. I have close associations with the Maskwacis Cree as friends and Teachers. My grandparents settled close to their reserve which meant our histories intertwined over several generations. I give thanks for their friendship and generosity and for the privilege of living in their territory, where the bones of my family also rest. I now live in the unceded territory of the Coast Salish in the Pacific Northwest. I give thanks daily for the incredible abundant beauty of this Land and its peoples, including the richness of their Traditional teachings. I acknowledge the violence of ongoing colonialism and racism as well as the daily daunting challenges Indigenous peoples face, here and globally.

What is Required of Us in This Historical Moment?

In a land known for its ice and snow, Canada has just experienced its warmest winter on record. Generally, the coldest months are December to February, yet we have experienced the warmest weather these months in 77 years of record-keeping (Macdonald 2024). On average, Canadian temperatures were 5.2 C warmer than the winter norm (Shingler 2024). Very low snowpacks have not only meant skiing and other winter sports were uncertain this winter, but drought in the agricultural sector has farmers selling off livestock and rethinking crops and wildfires have already started early spring. New species of insects, birds, and mammals are migrating north, changing their ranges

either in latitude or in altitude. Drinking water is increasingly threatened with additional usage restrictions, despite normally vigorous Canadian rivers. Over 100 forest fires continued to burn across Canada throughout the winter. In the past few summers, giant fires have hit the Arctic leading to the mass evacuation of the capital city of Yellowknife, as well as devastating whole towns from Fort MacMurray to Lytton. More furious hurricanes swept part of a Newfoundland town out to sea and levelled many forests in Nova Scotia. No matter where you are, you can likely relate.

While I do not normally start an article with depressing storytelling, we, as educators, must take an honest look at these complex realities to understand what is required of us in this moment. These Canadian events are consistent with the World Meteorological Organization announcement stating that 2023 was the warmest year on record, with an estimated global average near-surface temperature at 1.45°C above the pre-industrial baseline. We have nearly reached the Paris agreement of holding global warming to 1.5°C or well below 2°C. Additional global records have been broken in terms of ocean heat, sea level rise, Antarctic Sea ice loss, and glacier retreat (Shingler 2024). Most of global warming is absorbed by the ocean, over 90%, which has warmed the top metre by 1°C from preindustrial temperatures, leading to new marine heat waves, loss of coral reefs and sea life, further feeding the conditions for extreme weather events (Mortillaro 2024).

While everyone is impacted by these environmental and climate changes, included the monied and power elites, it is the most vulnerable who suffer the deepest and longest-term impacts—from heat- and smoke-related illness/death to trauma, displacement, joblessness, and homelessness (Agyeman 2013; Walters 2022). Fleeing climate hot spots is now one of the top causes of refugee creation (UNHCR 2023).

We are well into the climate change era, an existential moment for current generations. We are the transitional generations who are the decisionmakers for the future of the planet and our human successors. What is required of us as humans in this time? More specifically, what is required of us as adult educators? These questions are particularly poignant as life on the planet, which has developed over millions of years and through numerous extinction periods, faces another profound challenge to existence as we know it. In this, social, ecological, economic, and cognitive justice are integrally woven together. This paper will consider these aspects of justice while posing some possibilities for adult education futures.

It's About Carbon, But So Much More

We are witnesses to an epochal shift that has multiple facets. The first facet of this epochal transformation is moving from the Holocene geological period where the Earth's environment has been unusually stable over the post-glacial 10,000 years to what Crutzen and Stoermer called the Anthropocene era in 2000. It is so called as eight billion humans have become a biophysical force changing the context of life on Earth since the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, including its composition and functioning (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Folke 2013). This time frame has been verified through glacial cores and lake bottom studies. They concluded, "To develop a world-wide accepted strategy leading to sustainability of ecosystems against human induced stresses will be one of the great future tasks of [human]kind" (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000, 18).

The Stockholm Resilience Centre (Richardson et al 2023) recently reported that we have pushed six of the nine living systems past their normal operating parameters into the zone of risk. In addition to *climate change*, this includes:

- *biodiversity loss* at unprecedented rates, the largest loss of life since the dinosaurs;
- *land use changes* converting wildland into agricultural land and shrinking available habitat;
- *freshwater use* changing natural hydrological cycles;
- *biochemical flows* where fertilizers have polluted air and water with high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous;
- *ocean acidification* where the ocean absorbs too much carbon, slowly changing its chemistry;
- *aerosol particles* in the atmosphere which are beginning to impact cloud formation and thus water cycles; and
- *novel entities* such as plastic pollution interfering with natural processes.

One piece of good news is that *ozone depletion* has been reversed since the 1987 Montreal Protocol when it garnered concerted global action. While the Stockholm Resilience Centre (2023) takes a systems approach to understanding the interactions between all these planetary systems, they have indicated that climate change and biodiversity loss are the two most critical and intersecting planetary boundaries requiring significant global effort.

Until 2030 has been called the *decisive decade* where what is required is that humans pull their activities back within Earth's regulatory capacity (IPCC, 2023). Placing 30% of the planet's land and waters under protection by 2030

and reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2040 is vital for attenuating the damages of overshooting boundaries, as the base requirement for life as we know it. There has been concerted effort by many nations, cities, and regional communities which inspires some hope. There is halting progress toward these goals, with the results only now becoming visible. Just as climate change is accelerating due to self-amplifying positive feedback loops, it is hoped that climate actions will also self-amplify over the next two decades.

Dealing with carbon emissions and biodiversity loss are critical in the short term, but this is not just a technical problem requiring the usual technological solutionism. The logical end of hegemonic late-stage capitalism, industrial extractivism, and colonial modernity is a polycrisis: combined climate, ecological, economic, political, cultural, social, and cognitive crises. Using systems thinking, a polycrisis is defined as “a single, macro-crisis of interconnected, runaway failures of Earth’s vital natural and social systems that irreversibly degrades humanity’s prospects” (Homer-Dixon et al 2022, 3). Thus, this long-term epochal shift has another facet, a civilizational facet. “Our very ‘civilizational model’ – the ‘modern colonial capitalist patriarchal’ world system” is now in question (Kothari 2019 in Lange 2023, 335). As adult educators, developing a historical understanding in an ahistoricist time and a sociological imagination in an individualist time can be considered part of what is required.

Revolt of the Elites

Milan Babic (2020) summarizes that the Western liberal international order, largely in place since 1918, is in crisis. It has been comprised of a market-based economic model led by the United States (post-Bretton Woods which had fixed exchange rates), global-level institutions (ie. the United Nations), liberal representative democracy, and a civic culture (via citizenship and voluntary associations). The constellation of principles has included “economic openness, rule-based international relations, security cooperation, openness to reform and change, and solidarity within liberal democracy” (Babic 2020, 770). While contradictions have always been present, since the 2008 crisis of the financial system and Great Recession, more turbulent elements and fault lines are increasingly visible. This prompts questions of whether there is a possibility of “renewal and reorganization” or an inevitable breakdown with a new equilibrium eventually emerging (Babic 2020, 767-768). Certainly, as we soar past many planetary boundaries with increasingly catastrophic events, many scientists and social scientists predict a breakdown to some degree, as current institutions and systems will be stretched to their breaking point of well-resourced responses (Hansen, 2009; Homer-Dixon, 2006).

While the “revolt of the masses” was feared in the early 20th century (Ortega y Gasset 1932), Lasch (1993) argues that it has been the “revolt of the elites” in the late 20th century that have been hollowing out the middle class and democracy. Harvey (2007) explains that the liberal era of the social welfare state, when it reached economic stagnation, high unemployment, and soaring inflation (stagflation) but also a rapid expansion of social benefits and citizen participation, threatened the elites both politically and economically. From the 1970s, neoliberal societal experiments soon became orthodox economic practice through painful structural adjustment, austerity, and shock therapy programs, in the reassertion of class power. Keynesian policies which had focussed on full employment, economic growth, and citizen welfare, ensuring a “web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment” (now charged as the interventionist state) and supporting all forms of popular organization, including through adult education, came under fierce economic and ideological attack.

As Harvey (2007) recounts, the notion of freedom was reshaped away from the notion of a social compromise between capital and labour with constraints on individual and corporate behaviour. Rather capital was disembedded from any constraints, utilizing a conception of freedom as the free market. The rights of private property, individual freedom (focussed on the market not politics or social life), and entrepreneurial virtues were embedded throughout societies. Libertarianism was promoted through education, media, and the law including market security, freedom of choice, minimal government, and ultranationalism. As Mayo (2019) explains, the framing around education shifted toward responsabilisation where education is an individual not social responsibility. Education provision was highly focused on jobs, skills, and attainment, a consumer view of education, despite the “cry of the many indignados” who despite higher qualifications could not expect a standard of living equal to preceding generations (Mayo 2019, 54).

Now, we were all to be entrepreneurs, including scholars as part of the knowledge class, in seeking out funding then commercialization of knowledge for profit. “Confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility” was core to neoliberalism. Rather than a balancing of individual and social goods, an extreme form of individualism was promoted, including personal (not social) responsibility and family values where the family is to provide social and health supports for members not the state. Several generations now have matured with the neoliberal project as their assumed reality, with no other reference points.

In multiple neoliberal economic experiments first in Chile then Iran, Western and “developing” nations then Russia and China, the result has been increasing economic and social inequality through obscene concentrations of wealth and power within the top elites but also the handmaiden management classes who share in these profits. Increasingly authoritarian and coercive states are accepted, seen as necessary to achieve freedom of global capital accumulation for the elites. As part of consent creation, the desires for fabulous wealth are manufactured, in part through the emulation of the latest consumer style peer pressure. Distrust and cynicism about the liberal international order has been systematically promoted among non-elite classes, well illustrated by the Trump era and January 6 attempt to overthrow American election results.

In the growing gulf between poverty and wealth, the promised trickle down has not occurred, even in the Global North. The middle/working classes are not sharing in the vast fortunes of the 1% accumulated through the real estate, finance, technology, media, and energy sectors. The non-elite classes are increasingly financially strapped, by contingent work, falling real wages, and now the post-pandemic inflationary spiral with soaring food and housing prices, further hollowing out of these classes. Lasch (2006) suggests that the upper 10-20% educated elites who serve the neoliberal global economy tend to affiliate internationally, circulating in their own world of money, glamour, knowledge, and popular culture. They have a growing disdain for the shrinking middle/working classes, especially for their more conservative often less informed thinking about the substance of public policy, and their reactions against growing cultural and moral relativism (Lasch 2006, 6, 11, 13).

As part of the neoliberal turn, the labouring classes involved in agriculture, forestry, mining, and oil/gas production have been polarized against environmental and climate actors. Green public relations focussed on misleading facts and pseudoscience which contested climate science, especially when it demanded changes in production that would compromise profits. Yet, industry understood that they “cannot win purely with a public relations drive and therefore need to initiate a pro-industry activist movement not only to win the public’s hearts and minds but to fight the environmental movement...It takes a movement to fight a movement” (Rowell 1996, 13). These groups persuaded labouring classes that they were “freedom fighters” whose property and job rights were being encroached by government, environmentalists, and international policies, who they charged were either “fanatics and ecoterrorists” or “elites” using “suspect science.”

The development of social movement actors who were front groups for corporate actors undermined science-based knowledge related to the

environment, climate, and consumer safety. They created a demonization/victimization rhetoric to polarize and then direct the hatred and rage against the liberal elites rather than the neoliberals. Augmented by social media now, the misinformation and disinformation industry shapes daily discourse creating a deep wariness among citizens to engage in public discussion. One of the core challenges in climate communication is trying to reach across this polarized ideological and class divide to nurture once again the ground of solidarity.

Using a Gramscian understanding of crisis, Milan Babic (2020) argues, we can “‘connect the dots’ of crisis events and phases [at the global, state, and societal levels] into a consistent narrative” (775). A historical understanding and a sociological imagination can not only put the 20th and now 21st centuries into perspective but can revitalize much needed social solidarity. We need to understand these elements as indicative of a dying era, accelerated by neoliberal economics.

As Things Fall Apart: Sitting in the Crack

Many now believe that we are in the dying days of modernity (Akomolafe 2022; Andreotti 2021; Eisenstein 2013). Babic asserts that one of the most pertinent elements of Gramsci’s theorizing now is the notion of the interregnum. Gramsci (1947) referred to an interregnum as the place between two eras where what exists is dying, with many morbid symptoms appearing, until the new form can be born (311).

Arguably, one key feature of the interregnum is where the governed become increasingly alienated from their economic and political leaders. We are witnessing the morbid symptoms as the increasing tendency toward authoritarian and fascist politics, a profound loss of democratic debate and deliberation, acceptance of extremism, hostility to internationalism, provoking of culture and race wars, and the rage and hatred industries leading to increasing violence and incivility in our communities. We are seeing it in a withdrawal from politics through cynicism and distrust of not only leaders, but of each other.

Agitating deep divisions, the rise of right-wing populist parties and post-truth politics deliberately challenges the pillars of the liberal international order by appeals to foundationalism (religious, ideological, or otherwise), withdrawal from international economic and political relations, and the “revival of national glory and strength” as seen in Trump in the USA, Erdoğan in Turkey, Orbán in Hungary, Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Putin in Russia, to name a few (Babic 2020,

778-780). While these impulses work against non-elite class self-interests with many “cultural and identity-related contradictions,” the ideological narratives are sufficiently compelling that there is now a loss of legitimacy and a growing “sense of crisis of world order” (Babic 2020, 782). Babic predicts that this interregnum and its unmanageability may last for decades (774).

In the Global South, especially in megacities, not only are large numbers of population contingent labour but many of the unemployed are blatantly considered “surplus population” (Stuchul, Prakash & Esteva 2021). “Vast numbers of people now serve no use for capital. They are considered disposable. And today, the disposable are being disposed of – a new iteration of war [...] what the Zapatistas call the ‘Fourth World War’” (2021, 416). Stuchul, Prakash and Esteva suggest that the pandemic has made the fragility of public policies, the invocations of science, and governmental controls to limit such things as pandemics and climate change even more unpalatable to many, who turn to polarizing leaders promising to upend the established liberal international order. Social cohesion can no longer be assumed, as the intersecting colonial, ecological, and social realities cause a further unravelling (Heinberg & Asher 2022). Extractive capitalism continues to lay waste to vast stretches of land and waters. Yet, historic injustices are still evident in “green colonialism” where “climate ambitions [are pursued] on the backs of the poorest people” despite that the Global North is responsible for 92% of carbon emissions (Walters 2022, 133). Daily, food and water insecurity, weather unpredictability, and rising sea levels threaten wellbeing. Stuchul et al (2021) assert that “to pretend to ignore the war is to perpetuate it” (p. 416).

We need to understand we are between stories (Eisenstein 2013). Just as Gramsci intimated, Bayo Akomolafe and Vanessa Andreotti describe that the material shape of what is emerging as a new era is not yet clear. The polycrisis is a wide-scale socio-cultural worldview problem requiring a reimagining of who humans are in relation to the living world, and what responsibilities humans have to this world and each other. While they provide practices for disrupting the old story of modernity, we also need to sit in the crack between epochs, in the tension of the not-yet, fully inhabiting this inbetween time.

As Akomolafe (n.d.) suggests, “times are urgent, let us slow down.” This is hard work for a way of life predicated on endless speed, progress, and task-oriented hyperactivity. It calls us to a deeper humanity through a slowing down, a thoughtfulness and compassion, and an engagement with the living world. Andreotti (2021) calls it “hospicing modernity” where we act “with compassion to assist systems to die with grace, and to support people in the process of letting go—even when they are holding on for dear life to what is

already gone” (xxii). Modernity, she says, cannot teach us how to offer palliative care for its dying. Rather, we need to find ways to create and hold space “for difficult and painful things” especially all the myriad ways we are invested in modernity, including the assumptions of “separation and superiority” over the living world (xxiii). It is collective healing from modernity and in that, a pathway emerging. Pedagogical entry points and practices for composting modernity can be found in Lange, 2024b.

How Shall We Live? Storytelling into a Relational Pluriverse

We can only do something different if we are *becoming* something different. This involves a cosmo-onto-axi-epistemological transformation (Lange, Polanco O’Neil & Ross, 2021). Such a transformative process involves critique, chaos/emergence, and imaginal design. A profound process of social change is a wholistic, multi-faceted, integrative critique of modernity, attending to material interests, social relations, structures (ie. political economy and technology), individual consciousness (ie. attitudes, beliefs, values as well as embodied and perceptual capacities), and social consciousness (ie. shared symbols, collective identities, and social organizations). This critique can take the shape of narrative that connects the dots of modernity, as Babic described and as is demonstrated here.

Drawing from a systems theory of social change, Fritjof Capra (2024) suggests that it involves some level of chaos, which can lead to a total breakdown or a partial breakdown which can free up the energy for emergence, which occurs when a system emerges into a different level of self-organization. As Arturo Escobar (2017) describes, during this uncomfortable time, we need a “transition imagination.” With a transition imagination, we can consciously free this energy, attune to a life-giving way of being, and thereby engage in an anticipatory designing of future civilizations, one footstep at a time, from the “many strands of tradition, culture, and history” (Ruether 2005).

Relationality: Old Stories and New Stories

Transitioning involves moving from old stories into new stories. In the old cosmological story, Newton and Galileo saw the universe as a large clock where all the planets, stars, and galaxies move mechanically while floating in black empty space. In the new cosmological story, the Hubble and James Webb telescopes see the dense and complex webs of energy pathways connecting all the stars and galaxies, now called the cosmic web. While materialist science gave us a mechanist understanding of time and space, a new view of *spacetime* fuses the three dimensions of space and time together without constancy and

uniformity. In this view of relativity, space is not fixed and time flows at different rates. Our observation is an act which itself changes what is observed. In this emerging view of wholeness, one particle cannot help us understand the whole. As Einstein explained, separation is an illusion of our current consciousness.

In the old ontological story, the fundamental reality was matter. In reductionist science, the smallest bits of matter were atoms, as the building blocks of the universe. Now, in the new quantum ontological story, subatomic physics understands that particles can show up as energy or matter or both. Reality is a highly sensitive web through which vibrations of energy are continuously pulsing and transmitting information. The concept of relationality is a revolution in seeing reality as a vast sea of energy where all things are connected. Assessing deterministic causal links is not possible given the constant fluctuation of subatomic particles and plasticity of time. We can only assess probabilities in any given moment. While the old story looked for parts and functions, the new story now looks for patterns and systems.

As part of this old ontological story, Earth is comprised of inert substances that are constantly malleable and available for human use as “resources.” In the new story, however, the Earth has maintained the conditions for life through constant feedback loops, both positive (self-amplifying) or negative (self-correcting). The interconnections between the hydrosphere, atmosphere, geosphere, and biosphere are networked systems that are self-organizing and self-regulating to ensure optimal conditions for life to exist. Further, conventional science has studied living things by isolating them from influencing factors as well as seeing species as competitive, red in tooth and claw. In the new story, however, we see living systems as inherently networked, linked, and cooperative. Natural systems have a form of agency says physicist Karen Barad (2007), illustrating where it is healthy and where it is ill.

In the old story of individualism, humans are self contained in their bodies and minds. We are each pursuing our own good, our own freedoms, our own entitlements...responsible primarily to ourselves. In the new story, we are Nested-I's (Bollier & Helfrich 2019) or communal individuals (Gould 1978), who are profoundly related to all around us. Our body boundaries are perforated with the flow of mineral and chemical elements as well as energy. The living systems within our body are nested within a social system which is nested within the Earth system which is nested within a cosmos system. And like a spider's web, any movement is relayed immediately throughout the web, a form of energetic resonance.

In the old Western axiological story, there is one Truth and one way of finding truth and arriving at a moral determinations, formerly Christianity and later through science. It is clear now the diverse sciences and spiritualities that previously existed developed their own stories about the origin of the universe, the origin of humans, instructions for humans on how to live on Earth, and their own science by observing physical changes. These diverse stories are all part of the larger human story, one truth among many. As Indigenous people say, these are all simultaneously true. Further, they assert that learning modalities through story, music, poetry, and art are the oldest ways of learning and knowing.

In the old epistemological story, living beings are biological machines and nonhumans have no sentience or even feelings of pain. In this old story, only humans learn and are sentient, although behaviourism suggests limited learning via reward and punishment. In the new epistemological story, however, every cell in every living being uses perception and cognition to maintain a state of health. As Christian de Quincey (2005) says, consciousness goes all the way down. Thus, cognition IS the process of life. All of life learns as they live. Even living systems such as forests are cognitive systems, and they are responsive to changing conditions and actors. Therefore, human learning is learning responsiveness to the intelligibility of the world.

Further, all living beings are comprised of energy fields, including humans. Each of us generates a powerful electromagnetic field six to eight feet from our body with the heart as the most powerful centre of neural cells that receive and process information. Groups of beings have an energy field too, which can be coherent or out of synchronicity, whether a partnership of two people, a family, a community, workplace, or a classroom of learners.

In the old story of learning, there has been a spectator and accumulative understanding that was essential passive and consumptive. Yet, learning can focus on energy and movement and add far more perceptual pathways for learning, including the body, emotion, physical sensations, and intuition (Lange 2022). In process learning, learning is always moving and revealing, unfolding and enfolding. In teaching for emergence, learning over time leads to decision points in our learning regarding habitual or novel patterns. With enough perturbations, the increasing chaos can lead learners to a breakthrough into higher level of understanding and self-organization, called deep transformative learning (Lange, 2023).

Finally, the old story of education and learning has been predicated on the naturalism, universality, and superiority of the Western knowledge system. As in many other areas, education is still structured on an industrial model and Western hierarchies of value and importance. Education via schooling has been used globally for proselytizing, civilizing, industrial producing, modernizing, and globalizing (Lange 2024a). Property structures and the commodity form have deeply shaped school structures, including market logic considering education a commodity. Many Indigenous and Global South theorists assert that a new story must move past Euroamericancentric cognitive imperialism that discounts so many other ways of knowing and being (Battiste 2017; Odora Hoppers 2021).

Kinship: Wahkowsowin, Ubuntu, Interbeing...

The first word I was taught by my Cree Teachers was *Wahkowsowin* meaning “all my relations” or “we are all related” and “reciprocity with all life.” Relationality is a global concept, reflected in parallel words such as: ubuntu, buen vivir, mitakuye oyas’i, kith and kin, interbeing, ayni, to name a few. A relational way of being, understood as kinship or where all living beings are our kin or part of our family, requires a deep process of re-remembering.

Indigenous languages are verb languages – so kinship means the *act* of being in relation or active recognizing of the animacy of the world. Kinship does not mean means *having* relations, but rather that we *are* our relations. We are born into certain family and social relations as well as different biotic, cultural, and historical relations. We are inherently related as we grow in the womb and are birthed – we emerge with our own little body, touched gently by our parents and relatives, feeling the energy fields around us. The air and water of that place are ingested for the first time. We are embedded, not self-contained. As Barad says (2007), we are performed into being through these relations.

This entails an ethics of respect and reciprocity with all living beings and processes. We cannot manage the planet, but rather can learn to follow its lead. When we respect the living community, we are drawn towards it and study it with a “deep beholding” (Lange, 2023, 370). Learning the language and patterns of the Earth, ecological literacy, evokes human responsiveness rather than power and control. It can also assist us in redesigning human habitation and ways of being/knowing, entangled within the whole. As Indigenous people purport, Land is the Teacher. We unfold knowledge and meaning in dialogue with the natural world and other beings (Lange, 2023), rather than grasping and demanding that it unveil its secrets and show what is useful to us or what we can manipulate. We approach with delicacy, wishing “to be well in relation...restrained and nonviolating” (Lange, 2023, 370-371).

Regenerative Principles of Life

Deep sustainability means living into a different way of being and doing that can sustain Life indefinitely (Lange 2023). Regenerative cultures are those that “put life at the centre of every action and decision” (Hawken 2021, 9). Regenerative practices heal the severed relations between humans, communities and the living world. Relearning limits to human action and the principle of balance, particularly the balance of not overshooting ecological boundaries while providing a foundational floor of social goods for all, is captured in “Doughnut Economics” by economist Kate Raworth (2017). This delicate challenge of reframing limits and reclaiming the principle of balance has been the ongoing conundrum for creating sustainable societies.

Revitalizing the Commons and Conviviality

Contesting the monolithic concepts of modernity, the notion of pluriverse worldmaking is creating a world where many worlds fit, say the Zapatistas (in Lange, 2023). It is a reclaiming and revitalizing all the plural ways of being and doing, plural ways of being human embedded in an agentic living world and cosmos. It is rethinking cosmology, ontology, axiology, and epistemology, as described above, examining alternatives past and future. A *commons* is a life form, where peers are engaged in organic, self-organizing, bottom-up practices called “commoning” that offer wider freedom, are moderated by the concerns of fairness for others, and which respect all life forms. They have a self-healing quality when disruptions and conflict occur. Such micro-practices in our social life can develop new forms of power, and undertake social change in a relationality manner.

Bollier and Helfrich (2019) describe how “the commons” is being revitalized outside of property relations. Some of these alternatives are already occurring in “small, local, and sometimes forgotten places” (Lange 2023, 393; Esteva & Prakash 1998). Commoning is how a community learns to redesign itself on a daily basis, in three areas: provisioning, peer governance/democracy, and social life. This requires a composting of predatory competitive capitalism, aggression, and violence, and power-over in any form. It requires relearning the skills of conviviality, including the non-modern arts of living and dying. It is relearning balance between all cosmic principles, including the Feminine and Masculine principles.

Nurturing Networks of Learning Commons

Building from Illich (1970) and his notion of learning webs, learning commons occur outside of schooling wherever people have learning needs and gather to learn, enabling access to the learning that communities require. This acknowledges many different ways of knowing and forms of knowledge, where all are teachers and learners. A *learning commons* grows by links to many other small commoning groups around the world. As educators, we have established a learning commons in our small city, which is growing organically as people come forward to offer learning or who indicate their needs related to growing a regenerative way of living. It is re-envisioning what adult and lifelong learning, particularly popular education (Mayo, 2024), might look like in our context.

The learning, process learning, starts from our intentions toward our relations (Lange, Polanco O'Neil & Ross, 2021). It is a whole body, mind, spirit, and heart experience. It can foster alternative ideas about wellbeing that are not monetary, status, or power-oriented. A contextual approach is responsive to each community's history and character as well as the interests and values of different learning groups. It is also land-based education in learning *about, in, for, and as* the particular ecosystem in which the learning takes place, as a form of ecoliteracy (Lange et al, 2021).

Our Great Work and Adult Education Futures

"Like the [poly]crisis, the transition we face goes all the way to the bottom. Internally, it is nothing less than a transformation in the experience of being alive. Externally, it is nothing less than a transformation of humanity's role on planet Earth" (Eisenstein 2013, 6).

Our Great Work, as Thomas Berry defines it, is connecting our education work to the story of the cosmos, the history and dynamics of the Earth, and the fate of all species including the human species. We can be midwives for the needed transformation through a transition imagination, toward a more relational and life-giving way of being. It is fair to say that the field of adult and lifelong learning (ALE) remains largely anthropocentric and has suffered from a failure of imagination beyond what is, given its professionalization and institutionalization. Once again, inhabiting the margins outside of institutionalized education is one open space for taking up the education work needed in this moment.

In a recapitulation of what is required of adult educators in this moment is: teaching to live within the planetary boundaries, re-inserting ourselves into the web of life, re-fashioning human habitation by mimicking the principles of life, composting the problematic ideas of modernity and all the manifestations of separation and mechanism, telling the new stories of relationality, teaching for kinship as a rehonouring of Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching the skills of commoning, establishing a network of learning commons each in our own context, enacting process learning, and teaching for emergence of a new era. It is a stretching of our cosmo-onto-axi-epistemologies perceptions toward post-anthropocentric, post-patriarchal, post-Newtonian, post-Cartesian, and posthumanist thinking and being. All together this anticipates a pluriverse of ways where people in every place relearn how to live well in their own place, respecting a tapestry of ways of being human and being wise, while responsive to the living world.

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The Polycrisis and Adult Education Futures: The Transformative Work of Relationality

Elisabeth Lange

Abstract

We currently face a polycrisis, as a single macro-crisis of runaway failures related to the Earth's natural as well as social systems, which imperil humanity's prospects. In considering what might be required of adult educators in this historical moment, the climate crisis is described within the context of the revolt of the elites ushering in the neoliberal era. The logical consequences are a crisis of our civilizational form — the modern colonial capitalist patriarchal form. Drawing from Gramsci, we have entered an interregnum between two eras, where what exists is dying with many morbid symptoms. As we stand between these old and newly emerging stories, adult educators can take up their Great Work by composting modernity while using a transition imagination in teaching for relationality, kinship, regenerative lifeways, and commoning, establishing a global network of learning commons to meet local contextual needs, revitalizing a pluriverse of ways of knowing and being.

Keywords

polycrisis, interregnum, relationality, pluriverse, climate crisis, transition imagination, adult education futures

La policrisis y el futuro de la educación de adultos: El trabajo transformador de la relacionalidad

Elisabeth Lange

Resumen

Actualmente nos enfrentamos a una policrisis, como una única macrocrisis de fallos galopantes relacionados con los sistemas naturales y sociales de la Tierra, que ponen en peligro las perspectivas de la humanidad. Al considerar lo que podría exigirse a los educadores de adultos en este momento histórico, la crisis climática se describe en el contexto de la revuelta de las élites que da paso a la era neoliberal. Las consecuencias lógicas son una crisis de nuestra forma de civilización: la forma patriarcal capitalista colonial moderna. Inspirándonos en Gramsci, hemos entrado en un interregno entre dos épocas, donde lo que existe se está muriendo con muchos síntomas mórbidos. A medida que nos situamos entre estas viejas y nuevas historias emergentes, los educadores de adultos pueden asumir su Gran Trabajo haciendo abono de la modernidad al tiempo que utilizan una imaginación de transición en la enseñanza para la relacionalidad, el parentesco, las formas de vida regenerativas y la puesta en común,

estableciendo una red global de aprendizaje en común para satisfacer las necesidades contextuales locales, revitalizando una pluriversidad de formas de conocer y ser.

Palabras clave

policrisis, interregno, relacionalidad, pluriverso, crisis climática, imaginación de transición, futuros de la educación de adultos.

La polycrise et l'avenir de l'éducation des adultes : Le travail de transformation de la relationnalité

Elisabeth Lange

Résumé

Nous sommes actuellement confrontés à une polycrise, c'est-à-dire à une macro-crise unique d'échecs incontrôlés liés aux systèmes naturels et sociaux de la Terre, qui mettent en péril les perspectives de l'humanité. En examinant ce que l'on pourrait exiger des éducateurs d'adultes en ce moment historique, la crise climatique est décrite dans le contexte de la révolte des élites qui inaugure l'ère néolibérale. Les conséquences logiques sont une crise de notre forme de civilisation - la forme patriarcale capitaliste coloniale moderne. En s'inspirant de Gramsci, nous sommes entrés dans un interrègne entre deux époques, où ce qui existe est en train de mourir avec de nombreux symptômes morbides. Alors que nous nous trouvons entre ces histoires anciennes et les nouvelles histoires émergentes, les éducateurs d'adultes peuvent reprendre leur grand travail en compostant la modernité tout en utilisant unimagination de transition dans l'enseignement pour la relation, la parenté, les modes de vie régénératifs et la mise en commun, en établissant un réseau mondial de biens communs d'apprentissage pour répondre aux besoins contextuels locaux, en revitalisant une pluralité de façons de savoir et d'être.

Mots clés

polycrise, interrègne, relationnalité, plurivers, crise climatique, imagination de transition, avenir de l'éducation des adultes

Environmental Adult Education (EAE): A Course of Action for the Pakistani Education System

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Environmental adult education (EAE) is a relatively new and distinctive field of practice and research (Clover, 1997; Karlovic and Patrick, 2003), identified as "a hybrid outgrowth of the environmental movement and adult education, combining an ecological orientation with a learning paradigm to provide a vigorous educational approach to environmental concerns" (Sumner, 2003, p. 41). Environmental adult education (EAE) has been accredited as an efficient strategy for mitigating and solving ecological problems. Similarly, environmental adult education is crucial for conveying change, generating cognisance, improving standards, changing people's views, and refining abilities to attain environmental sustainability (United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, 2017). Besides, environmental adult education is a procedure of communicating skills, awareness, attitudes, and capabilities concerning the environment upon adults, with the understanding to assist them in attaining their duties and accountabilities concerning their surroundings (Ndulor, Christopher, Chukwuma, Mbalisi, Festus, 2019).

However, ecological challenges are an outcome of global industrialisation. As time passes, they have augmented to a frightening point. Certainly, analysing the discussions that whirled around the lately established United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio, 2012) one encounters persevering key ecological challenges. Social media communications consisted of the highest number of laments of the detailed geographical (Westerners against the rest of the world) and conceptual splits impeding the hunt for worldwide ecological mitigations. Regardless of focused efforts by global organisations, for instance, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), significant civil or policy binders by legislators to amend the harsh ecological programmes were feeble at best (Clover, Jayme, Hall & Follen, 2013).

As a sector that manages matters of societies and their development, we are arguably in education that should focus specific consideration on how to mitigate EAE, develop effective procedures and practices to offer practical solutions. Governance and management on EAE originate from the top levels; both the United Nations and UNESCO have borrowed their integrity and authority, a not irrelevant thing as numerous concerns contest eminence globally. This stage of interest specifies that ecological matters are enormous. There is a shared knowledge that these impact all other variables, such as racial backgrounds, gender disparities, level of education, and social inequality (English and Mayo, 2012). However, though all is not well, neither is it lost. The global community had experienced unconventional developments regarding environmental awareness and transformation from 1972 when the United Nations hosted the initial forum on environmental sustainability in Sweden. Models of change globally flourish. With, for example, increased energy production in Denmark from wind power; recycling programs increase. A majority of European nations have green festivities as an element demonstrating alliance between governments and native communities in nations; for example, Canada has implemented United Nations affirmations on traditional privileges to save their ancestral lands from devastation by human activities (Clover, 1999).

Situating EAE in the field of adult education

Globally, our sector has documented the significance of environmental sustainability as one of the key reasons, which are interweaved and influence one other. When the International Council for Adult Education inaugurated the Learning for the Environment Programme (LEAP) in 1991, this beckoned that AE was to be committed to make this a greater educational subject than EE was. The LEAP program and its numerous ingenuities, for instance, incidence and instruction at the Rio Summit on the environment in 1992 – defined in Clover (2006b)- paved the way for the eminence of environmental adult education (EAE) in Hamburg, at the 1997 CONFINTEA V, the UNESCO funded global conference on adult education. For the first time, this seminar exhibited the scope of environmental adult education. Adult educationalists, who attended the CONFINTEA, sought to declare detailed objectives around focusing on environmental adult education. Adult learning concerning environment, health, and people was one of their key subjects in the consequential agenda for the future (English and Mayo, 2012).

What is outstanding regarding this debate of the environmental sustainability is that it encompasses far more than conveying knowledge of the pending death of women, the world, and the environment. It is, in reality, a debate that

classifies the interconnecting structures of racial disparities, social status, and gender, which recommends that endeavours to mitigate this are completed by joining forces to address these concerns and eliminate the challenges that are experienced. It is also a position to distinguish the awareness that native societies have regarding their lands and way of life; for example, the fishing group of Newfoundland recognises a significant pact regarding the connection between increased number of seals and deprivation of the cod pillories off their coastline. The Adivasi farmers of India, found in North-eastern Canada, distinctive critical issues concerning their land, deforestation, and landlessness and their impacts in an approach that we at no time comprehend (Kapoor, 2003a). However, acknowledging the knowledge of these Indigenous societies is distant from the thoughts of regimes and legislators who formulate conservational policies. Therefore, the employment of representative equality is a main concern.

The topic of the environment is positioned as one of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals, meant to be accomplished by 2020. The main objectives are listed here:

1. Exterminate life-threatening poverty and malnutrition
2. Attain widespread primary education
3. Support gender impartiality and women empowerment
4. Decrease child mortality
5. Advance maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Guarantee environmental sustainability
8. Come up with an international alliance for development

Declarations regarding the environment, however well reinforced, can continue to be 'paper dummies' if policies are not publically implemented. Our first responsibilities as adult instructors are to combine theory and practice. There are few left who would not regard the condition regarding the environment as a concern. Our works (four specific concerns of our primary international adult education journal, *Convergence*, in each of 1989, 1992, 1995, and in 2000, are replete with data on the forthcoming disaster. However, we have solid backing for linking theories to the practice, to stretch the above to simply assisting individuals in relating all this to ordinary life. Above all we identify what we can do concerning environmental well-being. To attain this, we should join forces with other entities in identifying the partnership that is needed. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014, lately summoned member states to enhance contacts

between communities and educational associates (Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008; English and Mayo, 2012).

Furthermore, contributions of Leona English and Peter Mayo are guiding tools for developing awareness and understanding regarding EAE challenges. Leona English is known for her research on transformative learning and environmental adult education. She emphasizes the importance of addressing adult learners' beliefs, values, and assumptions to create lasting behavioral change. English's work highlights the following key contributions:

- a) Transformative Learning: English applies Mezirow's transformative learning theory to environmental adult education. She argues that transformative learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their assumptions, engage in dialogue, and take action to promote sustainable behaviors.
- b) Experiential Learning: English advocates experiential learning as a powerful tool for environmental education. She posits that hands-on experiences, such as nature-based activities and environmental field trips, can enhance adult learners' connection with nature and stimulate their environmental consciousness.
- c) Critical Reflection: English emphasizes the importance of critical reflection as a means of challenging existing societal structures and promoting sustainable practices. By encouraging adult learners to critically examine their own beliefs and societal norms, she believes transformative change is possible (English, 2013).

On the other hand, Peter Mayo's work in environmental adult education focuses on critical pedagogy, social justice, and transformative praxis. His contributions are as follows:

- a) Critical Pedagogy: Mayo draws on the ideas of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy to develop an emancipatory approach to environmental education. He highlights the need to address power structures and social inequalities to achieve environmental justice.
- b) Ecofeminism: Mayo incorporates ecofeminist perspectives into his work, recognizing the interconnectedness of gender and environmental issues. He argues that an ecofeminist framework can promote sustainable practices by challenging patriarchal and capitalist ideologies.
- c) Participatory Action Research: Mayo advocates participatory action research as a methodology for environmental adult education. He

emphasizes the importance of involving adult learners in the research process, empowering them to address environmental challenges and create positive change within their communities (Mayo, 2013).

Status of environmental education for sustainable development in Pakistan

Consistent with the World Commission on Environment and Development, Rather (2021) points out that sustainable development is described as the progress that realises the current generation's needs without jeopardising the capability of future generations to realise their wants. Essentially, the assumption of sustainable development is unmanageable without an educated community in a given country. Education provides citizens with different conceptions and beliefs that pave the way for sustainable development. This education can render citizens of a given country resourceful and valuable. It allows them to come up with inventive solutions for the challenges experienced by society in the modern era. The purpose of this section is to analyse the contribution of environmental education in attaining sustainable development in Pakistan.

Rather (2021) argues that a critical question arises both in the local and global context on what kind of education it must be, which could be supportive in realising the goal of sustainable development. It is understandable that merely enhancing the education of the educated in society cannot accomplish this goal. An effective and high-quality education system can play a critical role in a nation's social and economic development. When reviewing the education system in our learning institutes, experts have realised that it has not expanded beyond the level of transferring knowledge. Paulo Freire, a celebrated educationist, has labelled such a form of instruction as the 'Banking Concept of Education,' an instance where learners become inactive participants in a school setting (Gorski, 2017). An educator conveys knowledge to learners, and students store the transferred knowledge in their minds to recollect it during examinations to attain good grades. This form of education does not nurture the reasonable development of cognitive, innovative, and empirical abilities of learners. It makes them androids without creative and critical-thinking abilities.

In Pakistan, a number of institutions of higher learning have witnessed an incredible increase. According to the records of the "Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan", there are one hundred and ninety-five certified institutions of higher learning that offer degree programmes in Pakistan (Habib et al., 2021). Based on HEC's statistics, seventy-nine are in the private sector. The growing rate of these institutions in the private sector

demonstrates the level of confidence in the high standard of education offered by these campuses. Contrary to these facts and figures, programmes to promote knowledge or awareness regarding environmental education or environmental adult education are minimal because educational institutions, NGOs or the private sector can play a vital role in the development of pro-environmental attitudes among young and older adults.

Habib et al. (2021) state that, regardless of an increase in state universities, numerous issues are negatively impacting the sector. Lack of skilled facilities, out-of-date core curriculums, learners' enthusiasm, insufficient government expenditure, limited access to high-quality instruction, high levels of ignorance, lack of emphasis on the knowledge economy, limited job prospects, an inadequate supply of fiscal assets are some of the substantial limitations experienced by higher education in Pakistan. Mitigating these limitations, the Higher Education Commission reflected sustainability and correlated practices in institutions of higher learning. They constitute a considerable part of sustainable development with environmental education.

To improve practices correlated with sustainable development, Habib et al. (2021) argue that the chairperson and governing boards of the Higher Education Commission commenced reflecting sustainability and sustainability development as a part of sustainable development goals. Deliberating the sustainable development goals in Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission introduced, in 2018, green practices on campus in fifteen institutions of higher learning. Habib et al. (2021) illustrate that such initiatives are inspiring proof that the Higher Education Commission demonstrates constructive plans toward sustainability in the country. As a strategy to promote environmental education in the country and the realisation of sustainable development goals, according to Shahzad et al. (2020), the Pakistani government has lately sanctioned and enacted the Pakistan Climate Change Act (2017). The Act affirms the correlation between deforestation and climate change; to end climate change, the legalisations governing forest policy should be amended.

The broad idea of education comprises the growth and adaptation of knowledge, attitude, and adeptness. The critical goal of education that associates it with sustainable development is to support and nurture learners' critical-thinking and resourceful initiatives and cooperation. Regrettably, such an educational structure is scarcely found within our society. Higher education must make learners' minds competent enough to understand the learned knowledge and implement it to mitigate the new challenges and problems experienced by our society.

Globally adopted environmental adult education initiatives

“Aesthetically illuminate, Visually animate, Collectively educate” (Clover, Jayme, Hall & Follen, 2013, p. 89) - with this agenda, many global efforts in stirring activities can be seen to promote environmental adult education. In Australia, the Aboriginal Development Unit in Darwin designed courses and workshops to teach contestants how they can craft big posters that can present visuals of social and environmental issues. Furthermore, the purpose was to educate and strengthen the knowledge of participants (Source: Shirley Gundhumawuy and Adi Dunlop, Aboriginal Development Unit, Darwin, Australia).

In Canada, Just-Us Coffee cooperation is a global organisation formed to incorporate multiple issues and provide informal instruction in the cohesive and dovetailing concerns related to environmental adult education. This organisation does not just sell espresso from landowners, and guarantee them a fair price. On the contrary, it carries out schooling and promotion work to elevate their motivation and to educate and connect with residents who oppose fair wages and perpetrate climate degradation. ruining of the climate. From numerous points of view this is associated with worldwide ecological grown-up training. It brings the matters innate in ordinary occasions (consumption of espresso at home) to a worldwide capacity where reasonable horticulture concerns are discussed, as are issues concerning the worldwide problems (English and Mayo, 2012).

Adult education plays a crucial role in “sustainable development”. It supports environmental, social, and economic goals of sustainable development, and generates constructive settings for empowering active international citizens. It adopts a substantial role in economic, societal and individual development. This section aims to analyse different examples of adult environmental education that societies can implement at the local and global levels.

A shared initiative that people living in urban areas can implement is creating community gardens spearheaded by the public health sector and community developers. By developing community gardens around the country, people can join hands to grow food sustainably and use strategies to enhance food security. Such ingenuities provide significant opportunities for informal adult education, environmental education and sustainable development. Walter (2013) reveals that this informal adult education is subsidised via knowledge programmes. These sustainable initiatives are most effective in urban centres where people are encouraged to develop and manage kitchen gardens that require smaller spaces. These initiatives also act as avenues for social change.

Community gardens are cited by Cannan (2008) and Sandlin and Walther (2009) as instances of societal movements. Cannan establishes a correlation between these gardens and "green social thought" (p. 365) (*italics in original*). This association contributes to the comprehension of how these gardens facilitate a shift in focus from local concerns to broader affairs (as cited in English and Mayo, 2012, p. 194).

Participatory theatre can bring about social change through adult environmental education. For example, participatory theatre promoted by Boal or other global practitioners of travelling theatre involves partakers and their organisations in matters relating to the environment. It encourages them to learn from their organisations. Comparable to other unpremeditated and subsidiary learning activities, participatory theatre expands society into the world of social action education (Heras López, Tàbara, and Lemkow, 2015). This auditorium and the music, arts, and other original practices, like those carried out by the Raging Granny movement, testify to the view that ordinary people have used paintings and music to support them in their fight for social change. In the course of the activity, the participants were called to reflect on the creativity music, and party engaged in peace sites at Clayoquot Sound. This is to understand the influence of such initiatives to endorse the overall struggle and impart environmental adult education in a global context.

Additionally, *People Assessing Their Health* (PATH) is a participatory practice, which offers societies a policy to consider how new activities, companies, and improvements in a community impact society's lives. This initiative, PATH, requests community members to join forces to evaluate problems and challenges and find probable negative and positive impacts on their general well-being as a result of these creative measures (Gillis, 1999). This procedure permits individuals to realise the correlations between general well-being and the factors that affect health, for instance, gender, sexual orientation, topography, occupation, and education in a social setting. These inventions involve multidisciplinary reflection, practices, and resources that can help mitigate social problems. PATH is a symbolic measure that underlines rural communities are under substantial global, industrialised pressure to maintain and support their source of revenue while dealing with conservational and other types of dilapidation.

Documentary film festivals are part of adult education where environmental adult education occurs via an unpremeditated and incidental informative procedure. People join forces to watch documentary films and initiate credible mitigations to adjust the concerns learned in films, which are employed as a social action education practice that supports communities to attain social

change. Roy (2009), a celebrated adult educator, has studied the efficiency of using documentary films to casually teach rural communities environmental matters. Roy's research is set in Antigonish, Courtenay, British Columbia, and Peterborough, Ontario. Although there are enormous movie carnivals, for example, the Venice, Cannes, and Toronto International Film Fiestas, Roy's studies on rural towns are successful because they reach multitudes of people. They provide an innovative facet to learning environmental adult education. For example, Clayoquot Sound's *Fury for the Sound*, a documentary film, demonstrates how women were an essential element of a social movement that continues to instruct people after the peaceful protest. Such an approach to adult education is globally fairly extensive. The CINEFORA held by GEM foundation in Malta encouraged debates around subjects generated by prominent documentary films.

Art is an effective strategy to communicate individuals' feelings and messages. Indigenous women in Australia, use a robust practice of transferring culture to the next generation through art. Art serves as a source of collective action for social change. Ideas can develop after careful deliberation or via active discussions regarding a particular issue, be it social, political, environmental, or economic. Clover and Markle (2003) argue that the catchphrases or statements can act as an effective way to inspire social change. In Vancouver and Gabriola islands, to create a resilient public stance, support individuals to protest against the construction of a gas-fired power plant, and cooperate, women opted to be involved in what they denoted as 'public quilting.' The quilts were successfully produced to halt the development of the gas-fired power plant at Duke Point in Nanaimo, British Columbia. According to Clover and Markle (2003), the production of quilts is an effective tool that promotes adult education, an active strategy to lead public debate on issues that affect social and environmental sustainability.

Based on the above examples, environmental adult education, implemented at local and global levels, will allow people to explore ecological concerns, participate in problem-solving, and execute necessary actions to improve the environment. Hence, society develops detailed comprehension of environmental problems and can make knowledgeable and accountable policies.

Options for the Pakistani Higher Education System

Designing and development of proper policies is the true demand for bringing this revolution in environmental adult education. Socio-political-environmental transformation is needed, in the way South Africans have been

rethinking their existing curriculum because, according to them, much transformation is needed to address contemporary environmental issues: how to use resources, aboriginal practices and to promote eco-tourism (Dillon, Ketlhoilwe, Ramsarup & Reddy, 2005).

As for the context of Pakistan, policy development is an essential element to achieve EAE awareness. Besides, as Bengston, Schermann, Hawj and Moua (2012) stated, such policies or activities designed for the purpose to promote awareness regarding environmental adult education should be culturally responsive. Partnership with relevant agencies or organizations would bring effective results to convey the message.

Environmental adult education can be used to promote environmental governance practices. As Mbalisi and Festus, (2019) states that EAE promotes environmental governance practice in Nigeria. Environmental Adult Education is a didactic interactive process that has the objective to convey, to adult individuals, general public components of information on environmental conceptions and frameworks, pertinent abilities to recognize and resolve environmental issues. They can convey ideas to oversee natural assets, acquire assertiveness and foster the sort of conduct to relate to the climate. It can furthermore provide the inspiration to represent the wellbeing of both the environment and those that live within it.

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed the development of environmental education programmes or disciplines in higher education. However, a thorough evaluation of the curriculum and contents is necessary to determine whether or not they are effective enough in altering the attitudes of young adults. Currently, the Pakistani education system is tasked with instilling attitude shifts in young adults and older adults. These hold the promise for the future and must be able to progressively confront the challenges of their environment. In France, case studies are focusing on the curricular examinations of those courses provided at university level, checking their alignment with the sustainable development goals. Besides, their activities are now focusing on contextualizing their curriculum in terms of their indigenous practices and agency (Barthes, Alpe & Bader, 2013).

Pakistan has a great resource of agricultural land. According to the country's finance division, 62% of the population is linked with agriculture. Unfortunately, lack of proper education, training or awareness means farmers engage in unhealthy practices for growing food. Farmers are not aware of the ways of growing organic or healthy food, or its benefits. Similarly, farmers are facing a drastic difference in terms of getting benefits on the sale of their food

crop. This inequality in price has created many problems for farmers and is ultimately poisoning the environment. Once more, drawing inspiration from Canada, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are fulfilling their responsibility to educate farmers about sustainable agriculture and ensure they are paid fair wages in order to promote agriculture, for which there is an urgent need in Pakistan also. However, it is critical to emphasise that the implementation of such measures is contingent upon the contextualization of environmental adult education within the framework of political, social, economic, and cultural imperatives. Otherwise, the integration of EAE in Pakistan would fail to achieve its intended objectives of fostering pro-environmental behaviour and attitudes and promoting environmental literacy.

Ideas can develop after careful deliberation or via active discussions regarding a particular issue, be it social, political, environmental, or economic issues. In Pakistan, through purpose oriented workshops and awareness campaigns, this culture can be developed. Clover and Markle (2003) argue that the catchphrases or statements can act as an effective way to inspire social change. In Vancouver and Gabriola islands, to create a resilient public declaration, support individuals to protest against the construction of a gas-fired power plant, and cooperate, women opted to be involved in what they denoted as 'public quilting.' The quilts were successfully produced to halt the development of the gas-fired power plant at Duke Point in Nanaimo, British Columbia. According to Clover and Markle (2003), quilt production is an effective tool to promote adult education. It proved an active strategy to lead public debate on issues that affect social and environmental sustainability. Besides, similar examples can also originate from the lands of Pakistan, when proper, efficient and effective steps are taken.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there exist ample opportunities, within our educational system, to overhaul, revise, and modernise its established methodologies. Politicians should reconsider the requirements and necessities of ensuring global survival. The government would therefore prioritise the initiation of initiatives that advance EAE in higher education. Furthermore, it is imperative that governing bodies and the government itself allocate adequate financial resources for the promotion of informal educational practises, in order to safeguard the future of future generations. With regard to the research conducted by Peter Mayo and Leona English, substantial advancements have been achieved in the domain of environmental adult education. Their work and research contribute significantly to the understanding of critical pedagogy, participatory action research, and transformative learning. Adult learners' critical awareness of

environmental issues and the promotion of sustainable behaviours are facilitated through the examination of their own beliefs, values, and assumptions. The recommendations that can be inferred from their research can provide guidance to policymakers and practitioners as they develop environmental education programmes that are efficacious for adult learners. These programmes aim to promote environmental consciousness and encourage the adoption of sustainable practises.

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Environmental Adult Education (EAE): A Course of Action for the Pakistani Education System

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Abstract

The primary aim of this paper is to examine the literature regarding environmental adult education, strategies or initiatives taken to address the complex environmental challenges our world is facing today and how this knowledge can be employed in developing nations by increasing awareness. The initiatives taken globally on Environmental Adult Education (EAE) are providing evidence that they were implemented at local and global levels, and they allowed people, young adults, and communities to explore ecological concerns, participate in problem-solving, and execute necessary actions to improve the environment. This study has explored the literature regarding EAE and recommendations are made for the Pakistani higher education system. This study concludes that by increasing awareness and understanding of environmental issues, promoting sustainable behaviour, promoting critical consciousness, fostering collaboration, integrating practical experience, and encouraging active citizenship, environmental adult education can contribute to creating a more just and sustainable world. The study shows that there is plenty of room in the Pakistani education system to revolutionise, revise and upgrade traditional practices. There is a need for politicians to rethink the needs and demands of global survival. Government needs to focus more on initiating projects which can promote EAE through higher education. Furthermore, governments and governing bodies are asked to allocate sufficient funds to promote informal educational practices so that we can save the future of coming generations.

Keywords

Environmental Education, Adult Education, Higher Education, Environmental Adult Education (EAE)

Educación medioambiental de adultos (EAE): Un plan de acción para el sistema educativo pakistaní

Sadia Bashir

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es examinar la bibliografía relacionada con la educación medioambiental de adultos, las estrategias o iniciativas adoptadas para abordar los complejos desafíos ambientales que enfrenta nuestro mundo actualmente y cómo estos conocimientos pueden ser utilizados en los países en desarrollo para aumentar la conciencia ambiental. Las iniciativas globales en educación medioambiental de adultos (EAE) están demostrando que se han implementado a nivel local y mundial, permitiendo a individuos, adultos jóvenes y comunidades explorar las preocupaciones ecológicas, participar en la resolución de problemas y llevar a cabo acciones necesarias para mejorar el medio ambiente. En este estudio, se ha explorado la bibliografía relacionada con la EAE y se formulan recomendaciones para el sistema de educación superior en Pakistán. Se concluye que al aumentar la conciencia y

comprensión de los problemas ambientales, promover un comportamiento sostenible, fomentar el pensamiento crítico, impulsar la colaboración, integrar la experiencia práctica y fomentar la ciudadanía activa, la educación medioambiental de adultos puede contribuir a crear un mundo más justo y sostenible. El estudio muestra que hay mucho margen en el sistema educativo pakistaní para revolucionar, revisar y mejorar las prácticas tradicionales. Es necesario que los políticos reconsideren las necesidades y demandas de la supervivencia global. Los gobiernos deben centrarse más en la implementación de proyectos que puedan promover la EAE a través de la educación superior. Además, se insta a los gobiernos y a los organismos gubernamentales a asignar fondos suficientes para promover prácticas educativas informales, asegurando así el futuro de las generaciones venideras.

Palabras clave

Educación Ambiental, Educación de Adultos, Educación Superior, Educación Medioambiental de Adultos (EAE)

Éducation environnementale des adultes (EAE) : Un plan d'action pour le système éducatif pakistanais

Sadia Bashir

Résumé

L'objectif premier de cet article est d'examiner la littérature concernant l'éducation environnementale des adultes, les stratégies ou les initiatives prises pour relever les défis environnementaux complexes auxquels notre monde est confronté aujourd'hui et la manière dont ces connaissances peuvent être utilisées dans les pays en développement pour accroître la sensibilisation. Les initiatives mondiales en matière d'éducation environnementale des adultes (EAE) ont démontré leur mise en œuvre aux niveaux local et mondial, permettant ainsi aux individus, aux jeunes adultes et aux communautés d'explorer les préoccupations écologiques, de participer à la résolution des problèmes et de mettre en œuvre les actions nécessaires à l'amélioration de l'environnement. Cette étude explore la littérature relative à l'EAE et formule des recommandations pour le système d'enseignement supérieur pakistanais. Elle conclut qu'en accroissant la sensibilisation et la compréhension des questions environnementales, en promouvant un comportement durable, en encourageant la pensée critique, en favorisant la collaboration, en intégrant l'expérience pratique et en encourageant la citoyenneté active, l'éducation environnementale des adultes peut contribuer à la création d'un monde plus juste et plus durable. L'étude met en lumière la nécessité de révolutionner, de réviser et d'améliorer les pratiques traditionnelles dans le système éducatif pakistanais. Les hommes politiques doivent reconsidérer les besoins et les exigences de la survie mondiale, tandis que les gouvernements devraient se concentrer davantage sur le lancement de projets destinés à promouvoir l'EAE par le biais de l'enseignement supérieur. En outre, les gouvernements et les organes directeurs sont invités à allouer des fonds suffisants pour promouvoir les pratiques éducatives informelles, garantissant ainsi l'avenir des générations futures.

Mots clés

Éducation environnementale, éducation des adultes, enseignement supérieur, éducation environnementale des adultes (EAE)

IN MEMORIAM
Srabani Maitra (1972-2023)

Decolonising Transnational Adult Education

Kiran Mirchandani, Hongxia Shan and Bonnie Slade
*OISE/University of Toronto, of British Columbia
and University of Glasgow, respectively*

In December 2023, the field of Adult Learning and Education lost one of its most promising scholars and staunch supporters. Srabani Maitra was the face of the best of the discipline – critical, praxis-oriented, equity-focused and global. We lost a dear friend, a close colleague, and an intellectual ally.

We met Srabani in the early 2000s at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (UofT) when she started her Doctoral Program with Kiran as her academic supervisor. At that time, Srabani was among the few international students on the 7th floor. During her program, she bonded with peer students given their common research interests and shared experiences of marginality. Among them were Bonnie and Hongxia, both postgraduate students at the time. We formulated a unique community of practice as we socialized, supported, and challenged one another as fellow students on our academic journeys. Not only did we take courses together, but we also started our reading groups trying to grapple with different bodies of scholarship, including institutional ethnography, a method of inquiry established by the late Dr. Dorothy Smith. We had our debates and differences. We also had our shared struggles. It is through our common efforts to understand these personal struggles that we embarked on their respective research journeys.

A pivotal point for us in our academic growth was when we joined Kiran, the late Dr. Roxana Ng, and a cohort of graduate students committed to “democratizing” workplace learning. Together, we not only conducted research, but we also ate lots of delicious food, learned about academia,

supervision and writing and, in the process, become lifelong friends. Collectively, we created a rare democratic, supportive space where faculty and students came together in a spirit of reciprocity and engagement. It is out of these joined research activities that Srabani, and her peers started emerging as researchers. For instance, out of the project, we wrote an ethnodrama, led by Dr. Jasjit Sangha, to bring to life the racialised working conditions for precarious workers in garment factories, supermarkets and call centres. When we performed it, Srabani brought great dramatic talent to the ethnodrama. We regularly would reminisce about how convincing she was as a cashier with repetitive strain injury.

Even in those early days, the seeds of all that she would later become were clearly visible. She picked difficult, thorny research questions and travelled in her scholarship through complicated terrains. She wrote her doctoral thesis on how the agency of women can be understood as a navigational process of learning, rather than a trait or a romanticized set of activities. Although it is impossible to discern this given the quality of her writing, she conducted her research for her doctoral thesis over six years, but actually wrote the thesis in six weeks, only because she received a prestigious postdoctoral scholarship with an acceptance deadline!

After graduating from the PhD she completed two postdoctoral research projects: a SSHRC Post-doctoral Fellowship at York University with Dr. Tania Das Gupta; and an Eyes High Post-doctoral scholarship at the Werklund School of Education in the University of Calgary, Canada, working with Dr. Yan Guo and Dr. Shibao Guo. Her postdoctoral research was even more impactful as she studied global contracting regimes, called bodyshopping. This phenomena remains hugely understudied because of the difficulty in gaining access to on the ground knowledge; Srabani seemed to be able to accomplish this with ease.

In 2017, Srabani joined the University of Glasgow in the School of Education as a Lecturer and found a second academic home. At the time of her death she had been promoted to Professor in Sociology of Adult and Vocational Education. In addition to her research and teaching, she put her energies into helping transform her institution into one which supports equity, inclusion and decolonisation. She brought a quiet leadership style to the university engendering deep respect, while treating others with the same. At the School of Education she taught, led funded research projects and was on the Senior Leadership Team. She was one of the Leads for the College of Social Sciences 'Addressing Inequalities' Interdisciplinary Research Theme, and a member of University's Regional Working Group for South and Central Asia.

Srabani was a scholar with a wide range of expertise across areas. Her research combined interdisciplinary theories and methodologies from sociology and education to focus on the issues of adult and vocational education, workplace skill training, transnational migration, race/racism and decolonisation. She was also active in disseminating research knowledge in alternative ways. In 2015, together with Dr. Tania Das Gupta, she produced a documentary film entitled *Journey to Find Myself Again: Experiences of South Asian Immigrant Women in the Canadian Labour Market*, which raises public awareness of the issues and struggles facing professional immigrants in Canada. It must be highlighted that Srabani's contributions to her academic fields spans different countries and areas. In Europe, since 2018, she was a Convenor for the Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms Network of the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA).

It is rare for one individual to have such a far-reaching impact, let alone one who has lived as short a life as Srabani had. While we celebrate her remarkable achievements, we also feel sorry for the many students, colleagues and friends who have been denied the opportunity to engage and be transformed by her. We think and ruminate about all that Srabani could have, would have, but did not have the chance to do.

IN MEMORIAM
Obituary: Ravindra Dave (1929-2023)

UNESCO's Humanist 'Lifelong Education' Pioneer

Maren Elfert

King's College, London

Ravindra H. Dave was born in Ahmedabad, India, in 1929. He studied education at the Universities of Bombay and Gujarat in India, and at the University of Chicago. His doctoral dissertation examined alternative models of education evaluation, beyond the traditional outcome-oriented schemes (Dave, 1963) – a topic he remained interested in and published on throughout his life. Before entering the realm of international organizations, he held the position as Professor and Dean of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and served as Head of the Departments of Curriculum and Evaluation, Textbooks, and Teacher Education in India. Given his contacts with the UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE)⁶, he was invited to join the institute and served as UIE's Technical Director from 1972 to 1976. From 1976 to 1979, he worked at UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning in Paris, before returning to UIE as Director from 1979 to 1989 (Elfert, 2002; 2013).

Dave joined UIE at a time when the institute's Governing Board determined that UIE's programme should focus on lifelong education (Elfert, 2013). This thematic orientation followed the publication of UNESCO's report *Learning to be* (aka the *Faure Report*) in 1972, which proclaimed lifelong education as the new global "master concept". During the 1970s and under Dave's leadership, UIE engaged in numerous research projects, organized seminars, and published a series of publications with the aim of conceptualizing lifelong education from an interdisciplinary perspective. Two of the key publications that emerged from this work were coordinated and authored by Dave (1973, 1976). For the purposes of the 1973 study, Dave and the team he gathered at UIE developed 20 "concept characteristics" of lifelong education, which

⁶ UIE was renamed in 2007 to UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

covered all stages of education; the formal, nonformal, and informal patterns of education, and the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The 1976 book was the result of a major study on the 'Foundations of Lifelong Education' coordinated by Dave, compiling contributions by international experts. The "Advances in Lifelong Education Series", published by Pergamon Press in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Education, and edited by Dave, made a groundbreaking contribution to the conceptual, operational, strategic and methodological study of lifelong education. In a reflection piece that he contributed to the 50th anniversary of the institute, Dave wrote that his "active involvement in this global future development aimed at the lifelong pursuit of human empowerment, enlightenment and transformation brought a sense of great professional fulfilment" (Dave, 2002, pp. 68-69).

After Dave returned to UIE as director in October 1979, he initiated, against the background of "large numbers of neo-literates relapsing into illiteracy" (Dave, 2002, p. 69), a major initiative for the development of learning strategies of post-literacy and continuing education within the broader framework of lifelong education, which dominated the institute's work during the 1980s (Dave, Ouane, & Sutton, 1989). With funding from the German government, the initiative involved a series of research-oriented training seminars held between 1981 and 1986 in Hamburg, Caracas, New Delhi and Nairobi (UIE, 2002). The post-literacy programme yielded the Literacy Exchange Network, which allowed the institute to build up a unique collection of more than 7000 examples of teaching and learning materials in the field of literacy and out-of-school education from over 120 countries and in 160 languages. This collection is still available at the institute today.

After his term as director of UIE, Ravindra Dave returned to India, where – among other things – he was invited by Anil Bordia to lead a committee to determine Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) in India soon after the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien (Ayyar, 2016). He stayed active in retirement and extended honorary services to various governmental and nongovernmental education agencies. He served, for example, as Chief Advisor to the Indian Council of Board of School Education, and Visiting Professor at Mahatma Gandhi's Gujarat University.

Ravindra Dave was one of the leading figures of the humanist lifelong learning movement. In an interview I conducted with him in 2014, he impressed me with his deep knowledge of educational issues and philosophy and his unique perspective on lifelong learning that derived from the combination of his Indian heritage (he referred to lifelong learning as "a very old concept in the Indian culture") and an idealistic-universalist worldview (he also referred to lifelong learning as "a dream....a dream of the whole humanity"). He was a

true internationalist who self-identified as a “soldier of UNESCO” (cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 230) and treasured working in an international context with colleagues from all around the world. During his time as director of UIE, Dave, who was affectionately referred to as “Ravi” by UIE’s staff, regularly invited staff members and visitors to the institute to his home, “for a social evening and an informal chat over a dinner with Indian curries” (Dave, 2002, p. 72).

Former collaborators remember him for his exceptional analytical skills and his capacity to synthesize complex, diverse and at times conflicting contributions, never losing sight of the objective.⁷ I was particularly inspired by the way he always saw the big picture and looked at history from a long-term perspective. When we talked about the economistic takeover of lifelong learning, he explained that the “economics of education”, while not wrong, had a “lopsided and truncated view of totality”. He considered the period of “economic globalization” only a temporary moment in history and assured me that it was not going to last:

This is a sort of struggle. And such struggles have always happened in history...The struggle at the moment is between the economic angle of life – and the humanistic angle of life. The economic angle has grown in the past decades in such a manner that the economists have taken the hold of education...they have developed what is called ‘economics of education’...But it is a temporary phenomenon. (cited in Elfert, 2018, pp. 227-228).

Ravindra Dave died in April 2023 at the age of 94 (UNESCO, 2023).

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IN MEMORIAM
John Field (1949-2024)

The 'Learning Professor'

Tom Schuller

John Field and I met as founding members of Warwick University's Department of Continuing Education, in autumn 1985. John had both substantial personal experience of adult education, as a mature student himself and then with a 7-year spell as lecturer in economic and social history at Northern College, and a PhD in the subject which he had completed several years before. I had neither the personal experience nor the doctorate, but John never made any attempt to assert his better qualifications. He was to me, as to everyone else who worked with him, a rigorous but wholly sympathetic colleague.

John was a historian by training and by inclination. The training is clear: a degree in history from Portsmouth, then the PhD at Warwick combined with a professional job teaching history to adults. The doctorate was on training and unemployment in the first part of the 20th century (published as *Learning through Labour: training, unemployment and the state, 1890-1939*, Leeds University 1992), and this period continued to engage his attention: thirty years after the PhD he published a book on the same historical period, this time on work camps (*Working Men's Bodies: work camps in Britain, 1880-1939*, Manchester University Press, 2013). Although for the bulk of his career his professional home was in the education of adults, he maintained a disciplinary historian's eye.

His career took him to different parts of the United Kingdom. I'd guess there aren't many academics who have worked in three of the four nations: after Warwick, John went to Bradford in the North of England, then across the sea to the University Ulster and eventually, after another spell at Warwick - this time as professor of lifelong learning - up to Scotland to the University of Stirling, where as well as holding a chair in lifelong learning he was the Deputy

Principal for Research and Knowledge Transfer. I'm not sure what Wales did to miss out on his talents. In each case he was sensitive to the national or regional preoccupations. One thing common to all these locations is that they gave easy access to hills, or at least countryside, as John was a keen walker.

But his reach extended well beyond the UK. Indeed, possibly John's single most outstanding characteristic was his pervasive internationalism. This was not the weary much-travelled cosmopolitan variety, but a genuine belief that we should understand other cultures and traditions. He was unusually (for an Englishman) proficient in German and French, and spent some time actually teaching in Cologne. He would constantly remind us, personally or at professional meetings, of these different perspectives, intellectual and political. There will be colleagues and friends in many different countries who are mourning his loss.

The list of John's mainstream academic duties and positions is impressive. Positions on editorial boards, on advisory panels and on research assessment reviews are too numerous to mention. I would just highlight John's 5-year stint as a Governor of Newbattle Abbey in Scotland and his membership of Foresight groups in the UK and the EU. He acted as PhD examiner in some 30 universities – a remarkable tally; the news of his death brought immediate tributes from some of those whose theses he had examined, as a rigorous but entirely sympathetic scholar. He engaged extensively in policy forums and committees without ever losing his academic identity.

Work on social capital was one of the major themes of John's writing. I enjoyed working with him and Stephen Baron as co-editors on an early book on the topic, published in 2001. John went on himself to write a very successful book on social capital, published in 2003 and translated into Italian and Turkish (and maybe other languages). It's a sign of its success, and of its quality, that it was republished five years later in a fully revised edition. Many would regard it, in educational circles, as the standard work on the topic.

I was personally delighted to have John as member of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning, sponsored by NIACE in 2008-10. John was always a perceptive and constructive member of the Inquiry, often contributing to the discussion with a slightly quizzical air but always with something that would give energy to the discussion. Similarly we worked together on the third UNESCO Global Review of Lifelong Education around 2015, where John's international range of experience combined with his research expertise made him a very valuable participant.

John carried on his reading and writing up to his untimely death. He blog posted as The *Learning* Professor, a nice reaffirmation that each individual carries on learning, or should do so, whatever their status. Lately his communications were more often to do with rugby matches, on which he would offer commentary as rigorous and objective as his adult education scholarship. A generous, vigorous man who exemplified the value of lifelong learning.

BOOK REVIEW

Jost Reischmann (Ed.). *Essential readings in international and comparative adult education* Ziel Verlag, Augsburg, 2021, 320 pp. ISBN978-3-96557-093-1 (pbk)

George K. Zarifis

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ πᾶσα μέθοδος, ὁμοίως δὲ πράξις τε καὶ προαίρεσις, ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ἐφίεσθαι δοκεῖ· διὸ καλῶς ἀπεφώνησαντο τὰγαθόν, οὗ πάντ' ἐφίεται. διαφορὰ δὲ τις φαίνεται τῶν τελῶν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ εἰσιν ἐνέργειαι, τὰ δὲ παρ' αὐτὰς ἔργα τινά. ὧν δ' εἰσὶ τέλη τινὰ παρὰ τὰς πράξεις, ἐν τοῦτοις βελτίῳ πέφυκε τῶν ἐνεργειῶν τὰ ἔργα. Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, (1094a-1094b).

"Every technical skill and every cognitive activity, similarly, every action and every process of choice and preference, has as its goal – by everyone's admission – some good. Rightly, therefore, they said of the good that it is that which constitutes the goal of all things". This is roughly the English translation of Aristotle's thesis borrowed from 'Nicomachean Ethics'. Who would have argued that the editor of this anthology, Jost Reischmann, the first President of the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE), had anything else in mind when he was compiling this motivating collection of published texts?

This is essentially the purpose of the anthology, prepared by the author and editor in his effort to trace what is 'good' in the lengthy history of the international and comparative approaches in adult learning and education; to exhibit its many forms and assist us in comprehending the different aspects that influence policy and practice across time and geographical borders. Jost Reischmann's argument culminates in a recognition of the relevance of contextualized politics, history, geography, and technique: what effect does this have on the reader?

Spanning 320 pages, the anthology unfolds ten distinct sections that introduce the reader to the history and development of the field, the added value of travellers' reports, the development of country reports and juxtaposition, references to specific comparative studies, the role of international organizations, reflections on some pitfalls in the comparative method, and some lessons learned. The book includes a foreword written by Tom Stork, followed by a preface and an opening induction chapter prepared by Jost Reischmann, an epilogue co-authored by Marcie Boucouvalas, Katarina Popovic, and the editor himself, and a final chapter that renders the editor's observations and perspectives for the future.

Overall, the book is very well situated with the similar anthologies in the field, like the one edited by Bennett et al. (1975), or the more recent one edited by Slowey (2016). The overarching aim of the editor in the selection of texts leaves the reader with very little room to avoid drawing the conclusion that any endeavour to learn from the experience of others (especially those who have made their careers in the field) can be extremely beneficial in facilitating reflection on "taken for granted" concepts and methods; as well as in contributing to the development of fresh theoretical and empirical views. In the first section of the book Reischmann is always sure to remind us that an uncritical approach might downplay the fundamental value of a comprehensive awareness of context, whether it be historical, social, or cultural. This can lead to erroneous efforts to transplant "good practice" from one environment to another. He draws on Michael E. Sadler's text from 1900 (pp. 21-25 of the book) to argue the practical value of studying foreign educational systems, which is that it will result in our being better fitted to study and understand our own.

The second section of the book (History, Development) has been thoroughly compiled by the editor. This section fundamentally unites the reader with George Z. F. Bereday's 1964 perennial perspective (pp. 38-49 of the book), that the most fruitful approach to studying topics is to select those that are living and relevant educational questions in one's own country. Comparative educators should turn to total analysis only after working through innumerable difficulties and diligently amassing research experience. This strong viewpoint is also held by authors such as Alexander A. Liveright and Noreen Haygood (1966) (cited in pp. 51-62 of the book) and Roby Kidd (1975) (cited in pp. 71-83 of the book), who assert that there is more to encounter than theory. This section encapsulates the universal position that adult education, in most of its forms and institutions, has existed outside of the official, government-supported forms of education and has often been disconnected from the area of comparative education. Comparative adult educationists appear to have

placed a greater focus on various aims (on the one hand, emphasis on the person learning about himself, and on the other end of the spectrum, rational societal change) than researchers more concerned with school systems. When comparative adult educators get more involved in the broader subject of comparative education, they have much to give and share, as well as much to gain. Unfortunately, while significant progress has been made in a very short period of time, comparative adult education has not progressed beyond a very rudimentary, embryonic level. This borrowing of cultural phenomena appears to have occurred without much consideration for how the new practice would affect the host community.

The third section of the book (Travelers and their reports) is what I would call the "less needed" part, particularly for today's researchers. As derogatory as this may sound, this section has high value for those readers interested in past representations of "the comparative". It does trigger thoughts of course, even more so when the reader reflects on such quotes as the one from Lore Arthur (2001) (cited in pp. 102-106 of the book), one of the very few women present in this anthology (others that appear in the various sections of this anthology include Elisabeth Reichart, Regina Egetenmeyer, Sharan Merriam, Hermien van der Heide, Qi Sun, Elizabeth Erichsen, Madeleine Blais, Marcie Boucouvalas, and Katarina Popovic), who suggests that: *"the more I 'travel' and experience, the more I am aware of the multifarious strands and layers that mesh into and out of what is commonly understood as 'culture' in the context of other countries and communities"*.

With his selection of texts, Reischmann always underlines the issue of securing meaningful, mutual trade, which is made more difficult by power differentials (for example, between the global north and global south) and the associated functions of various international or intergovernmental bodies. Sections four, five, and six are a compilation of texts that draw on comparative studies and country reports. In my opinion, the significance of these three consecutive sections is endorsed by Alexander N. Charters' and Ronald J. Hilton's reference from 1989 (cited in pp. 164-163 of the book) that the real value of comparative study emerges only from the attempt to understand why the differences and similarities occur, and what their significance is for adult education in the countries under examination.

The seventh section is probably my favourite, as it exhibits a number of characteristic traps and pitfalls, especially related to international comparative work. From non-analytical descriptions to "sophisticated superficiality," Michał Bron Jr (2008) (cited in pp. 254-269 of the book) creates awareness of the drawbacks and, by doing so, emphasizes their avoidance. In addition, there are

more than one lesson learned in the eighth section of the book. John Henschke's (2008) (cited in pp. 283-296 of the book) and Madeleine Blais' (1999) (cited in pp. 297-302 of the book) texts introduce us to some of the opportunities and pitfalls in international cooperation as well as dialogic approaches to transnational research.

This vibrant collection of diverse narratives reflects on even more contemporary issues such as climate change, natural disasters, armed conflicts, migrant and refugee crises, attention to human rights (including honouring diversity, alongside mass protest movements), and sustainable futures (economic, environmental, and social justice). Jost Reischmann acknowledges numerous additional concerns in the area, including cultural or personal bias in comparative research, white, western male dominance in the profession, and the authority of the English language in published studies. What was usually overlooked were the "bridges" between the various parts that would offer cohesion. There are no references to feminist, post-structural, or post-colonial ideas, which would definitely provide a healthy balance to the present authorship. Yet, as Reischmann so eloquently stated, "standing on the shoulders" of people who provided crucial information about content, techniques, and reflections may help increase the quality of comparison and make admission into this sector more fun and easier. This is how he tracked what is 'good' over the lengthy history of the international and comparative approach to adult learning and education.

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CONVERGENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles are accepted in English, French and Spanish.

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CONVERGENCE. AN INTERNATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION JOURNAL is a biannual journal published in open access by the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, Faculty of Education, in collaboration with the International Council for Adult Education, aimed at an international readership.

Because of our international distribution, we attempt to select articles of interest to a broad audience of practitioners, field-workers, planners, trainers, teachers, researchers and administrators.

In addressing issues, practices and developments in adult education, CONVERGENCE provides a forum for a discussion and exchange of experiences and ideas. Articles are accepted in English, French and Spanish.

Points to Remember

- We prefer to receive a letter of enquiry describing the content of the proposed article, its treatment and why you believe it is suitable for CONVERGENCE. Our experience has been that those who read the journal regularly are more likely to have a good sense of an appropriate article. The enquiry letter also helps us to judge if a similar subject or the same region has appeared in a recent issue – we attempt to maintain a balance among subject matter and regions of the world.
- An article may be about a particular country, programme or activity, but the interpretation, description and analysis should be of interest and generally applicable to the work of colleagues in other countries. Papers written for another purpose (e.g., a local audience, a course of study, part of a thesis) are usually unsuitable.
- Put yourself in the position of a colleague in another part of the world and ask: Does this article include what I would wish to know about another country or programme? Is the context clear? Have unfamiliar abbreviations, references or concepts been used?
- Heavily statistical research reports are not accepted. Interpret data, results and conclusions in terms of practical application and lessons learned.
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Writing should be informal, without jargon or convoluted sentences.

Keep footnotes and references to a minimum. Tables and graphs are considered only when they depict essential information that cannot be described adequately in the text. US and UK spelling accepted for texts in English. Numbers ten and under are spelt out; 11 and over use numerals.

Review Process and Response from the Editor: Articles are sent out to international reviewers; please expect a delay of three to six months for a response.

Requirements Submission: Authors are asked to transmit their articles in ASCII format via e-mail attachment. Length: Feature articles should be no longer than 5000 words; information reports up to 800 words; book reviews, 600–1000 words. Abstract: Upon acceptance, an abstract of 150–200 words is requested for translation into other languages. It should summarise clearly the points of the article. Book reviews, conference reports, other reviews and obituaries do not require an abstract. Author's information: Include the title, position, place of work and a background explaining your affiliation with the subject or country you are writing about. Include your address, telephone number and e-mail address. For more information, contact: CONVERGENCE Editor, Professor Peter Mayo, Professor, UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida MSD2080, Malta. Tel. (prefix 356) 99845476, email: peter.mayo@um.edu.mt.

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General Directions

Book reviews are an important source of information for adult educators in that they provide a valuable synopsis and summary of important recent texts in the field. Book reviews must provide a concise summary of the contents of the book and must address whether or not the book is a valuable contribution to the field. As such, reviews should evaluate the usefulness of the book and mention who would find the book useful.

We strongly recommend the review is introduced by a brief introduction to the text, with reference to its stated objectives, layout and chapter structure, etc. It is also recommended that reviews discuss the extent to which the text:

- a) Is comparable (or not) to other works in the genre, with examples of where this is particularly evident;
- b) Testifies to efforts that positively exploit and disseminate the state-of-art; primary / secondary research findings etc.; give voice / opportunity to 'silenced' / 'marginalised' authors, etc.
- c) Resonates with the work programme / agenda of our journal [*Convergence: An International Journal of Adult Education*](#). More info on this is available in the [editorial of the first issue of the relaunched version of the journal](#), also summarised below:

"articles... should help lift spirits in a disturbing time. Readers need little reminding that we face multipolar imperialisms bringing us potentially close to a Third World War. We are still reeling from a global pandemic and witnessing wider environmental degradation. Climate change is wreaking and will continue to wreak havoc especially in the Geographical Global South leading to constant mass migration flows. It is against this ominous global scenario that this journal is being resuscitated. The call for socially engaged adult educators strikes me as being ever so urgent" (Mayo, 2022, p. 3);

and

- d) What would be the specific research interests of readers / adult education specialists / practitioners that the text can support? (e.g., 3-4 examples of specific research interests and/or specific nomenclatures / levels of scholars / specialists / practitioners that the text can support).

The timeline for completion of a review will be negotiated between the book review editor and the reviewer. While most book reviews are solicited by the editor, *CONVERGENCE* does accept unsolicited book reviews. The editor reserves the right to reject reviews.

Style

Reviews should be written in a manner that is accessible to a general readership rather than to an academic audience. Footnotes and references must be kept to a minimum. For writing in English, *CONVERGENCE* accepts UK and US spellings. Numbers ten and under are spelt out; 11 and over use numerals. Include the title, author, place of publication, publisher and number of pages with your review.

Requirements

Length: Reviews should not be longer than 600–1000 words (about two to four pages).

Submission: Emailed submission is preferred (maria.brown@um.edu.mt), however, one copy may be mailed if email is not possible. The review should be typed double-spaced. MS Word format is preferred.

Author's Information: Include your institutional affiliation and its national location with the review. Also include your address, telephone number, and your email address.

For more information, contact: CONVERGENCE Book Reviews Editor, Dr. Maria Brown, Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida MSD2080, Malta, email: maria.brown@um.edu.mt