

Adult and Lifelong Learning in Europe and Beyond Comparative Perspectives from the 2015 Würzburg Winter School.

Egetenmeyer, R. (Ed.) (2016)

Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishers

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The novelty of the volume edited by Regina Egetenmeyer is the process of intersection between teaching and research which defines its entire background. In fact, the essays presented here constitute the fruit of intensive work done within the International Winter School 'Comparative Studies in adult and Lifelong Learning' in which students and lecturers from six European countries, India, North America and Africa took a closer critical look at European strategies and international standards of lifelong learning. Through plenary debates and group work, many aspects were plumbed: in line with this, the book illustrates the result of the products of comparison, focusing on specific themes that involved researchers and students in a reciprocal exchange of approaches and languages.

The framework of the whole work accurately depicts the partnership of figures with diverse levels of university expertise, exemplified by the collaboration between senior and junior echelons in the drafting of the articles. At the same time, the comparative approach also allows a glimpse of the many plans for the development of adult education at an international level. This is precisely the experience which diffuses the end product, not only does it represent an attempt to explain the complexity of the international framework, it also outlines the aim of overcoming this fragmentation by proposing a look at adult education from multiple perspectives, also with a view to supporting policies and measures for lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. The orientation of the essays insists on various levels of analysis (mega, macro, meso and micro), providing the reader with an overview of the many issues and problems that currently concern adult education at a global level. They can be read both under the lens of the research product and from the point of

view of the outcomes of international and intercultural educational activities. The fundamental outcome that emerges, even sooner than evidence of the comparison between national states, can be seen in the attempt – as ambitious as it is strategic – to build a shared terminology for an academic community to adopt as a common language.

The volume provides a broad framework of the crucial issues that concern adult education today and tomorrow, through the various themes illustrated by a comparison of strategies and policies (mega and macro level), the themes of professionalization and quality management (meso level), ending with a focus on adult participation in educational activities (micro level). It is precisely this variety, analysed according to a comparative methodology, that defines one of the main points of the destination of the intense didactic and exploratory activity. Simultaneously, the construction of a scientific community at an international level stands out as the strategic starting point for the future of research.

In the face of the emergence of global challenges which – albeit in their own respective forms – involve all the countries concerned, the sharing of approaches and practices outlines the ability to respond to the needs of adults with a gaze that is open, intricate and multi-perspective.

Consequently, the comparison between states, here the fruit of teaching practice and joint research, presents itself as a tool for sharing reports, methodologies and critically constructive looks at adult education, as well as developments of society in the broadest sense.

Notes

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² The International Winter School "Comparative Studies in Adult and Lifelong Learning" was held at the Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg from 28 January to 6 February 2015. It saw the participation of 51 Master's and PhD students and 20 lecturers from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

http://www.lifelonglearning.uni-wuerzburg.de/archive/winter_school_2015/ [12/2016].