



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Adult Education in Times of CRISIS

***European perspectives
2014***

CONTENTS

EAEA	3
Denmark: Employability, coping skills and democratic citizenship	5
Finland: Focusing on the Youth	6
France: The Effects of the Crisis on the Disadvantaged	7
Germany: Adult education bringing Europe together	8
Hungary: Employability, coping skills and democratic	9
Iceland: Nordic perspectives: Iceland	10
Ireland: The Transformation of the Adult Education Sector in Ireland	11
Adult education in times of crises: from Trojan Horses to New Ethics	12
The Netherlands: The Dutch Case of the Crisis	13
Norway: Adult Education in Times of Norwegian “Crisis”	14
Portugal: Adult Education in times of crisis - the Portuguese situation	15
Slovenia: Exploring crisis reactions in business and education	16

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The current economic crisis in Europe, which has its roots in the banking crisis started in 2008, has taken on different forms. EAEA outlines four main issues that adult education has to deal with: the economic crisis, the crisis of European cohesion and identity, the ethical crisis and the personal crisis.

The EAEA membership took the opportunity to discuss and analyze these challenges for adult education from their national perspectives. Member feedback from various regions showed that the crisis affected every European country in different ways and to different extents. Even though several countries such as Germany and Norway are not experiencing a severe economic crisis, it was questioned if “these are good times for adult education and learning?” In countries like Ireland, the numbers of adults seeking education and training programmes have increased, partly as a result of the rise in unemployment and the lack of economic growth, but also as a result of a skills mismatch between new jobs coming and the skills required doing them. However in other European countries quite the opposite was reported: due to low unemployment rates non-formal adult education “can be seen as a luxury we have no need for”. As a result, EAEA members from countries with low and high unemployment rates, report that the public funding for non-formal adult education is very low.

EAEA members recognized shifts in several European countries to further education now being provided by labor market authorities and increased funds being assigned to the vocational sector. In this way the governments and industries seek to support employability and prevent (youth) unemployment in their countries. Thus the focus shifted strongly towards raising educational levels through vocational training and focus on labor market needs. And although some EAEA members agree that there are undeniable benefits of an education developed in the context of “market learning opportunities” a danger is seen. The focus of investment in employability strengthens mechanisms of exclusion, through practices that tend to value and polarize among the most (formally) qualified and unqualified.

Europe is currently also undergoing a dramatic social crisis with a widening gap between the poor and the rich, where the poorest suffer, while the wealthy are relatively unaffected. In several countries adult education institutions have been forced to increase course fees, and as a result, persons without financial means have little chance to participate in non-formal adult education. This is alarming from the viewpoint of lifelong learning and equality because persons most in need of education and training are under the risk of being left out.

However, EAEA members see adult education as a tool for subverting power dynamics, enhancing civil society exchange and dismantling (political) prejudices. In times of recession, policy makers concentrate the focus on the immediate labor market needs, which often ignores the holistic aspect of (non-formal) adult education and narrows it down to a vocational view. EAEA members see the necessity to think ahead and plan long-term in order to serve the future education and training needs of adults. The membership underlines the importance for adult education to continue to be responsive and flexible as well as to focus on the priorities and needs of the learners. Adult education can contribute to people’s well-being and resilience, which is especially important in times of personal crisis. Finally, we believe that adult education is a key tool for more active participation and citizenship, which can contribute to greater European cohesion.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to create real lifelong learning systems in Europe, which include more exchange between formal, non-formal and informal education and learning;
- Enable cooperation, partnerships and mutual learning between the different sectors and on different levels (European, national, regional);
- Provide long-term planning for education and training objectives as well as a mixture of short-term and long-term instruments;
- Reinforce democracy in all kinds of learning and teaching, especially in teacher training;
- Create more links between policy, practice and research, for example through a European Institute for ALE that brings the three areas together;
- Raise a Europe-wide discussion on European values and how to re-establish them, and a new lifelong learning manifesto to accompany the discussion;
- European (member) states should be able to budget education and training expenses as investments rather than expenses;
- Commit to a Learning Europe Flagship strategy to promote learning for all target groups and in all forms. We propose to use the flagship initiative to start a dialogue with candidates for the European Parliament, and at the same time discuss the idea with the European Commission (DG EAC). Once the new EC and EP are in place, EAEA will start an advocacy campaign to convince the main institutions in Brussels to support a flagship initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATORS:

Back to the Roots of Adult Education

- Organize study circles / citizens panels / workshops that provide information and input by economists, historians, political scientists or other experts about economic, social and political contexts;
- Provide thinking and debate space for different and controversial approaches, which means (more) cooperation with other sectors, NGOs and movements;
- Strengthen work and learning with people rather than for people;
- Increase democracy within our own structures and empower / include learners;
- Raise awareness that learning contributes to well-being and a sense of self that is more resilient. A course is not just a course – it is social interaction, self-confidence and many more things;
- Create space and time for supporting the individual (resilience), a debate and reinforcement of values and more justice, active citizenship, dialogue and democracy.

Employability, Coping Skills and Democratic Citizenship

Annemarie Holm, Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA)

Denmark has a top score in every European report when it comes to adult education. Despite this, public funding for non-formal adult education decreased in 2002 as a result of a revised law. Why? A possible answer is that non-formal education is difficult to measure. The international economic crisis, starting in 2008 has led to a general lack of priority for democratic and humanistic values, except when these can be converted into “employability” measures.

When education strategies started to be closely linked to employment and social policies, new public management tools took over and employability became the primary interest when ranking and evaluating the effect of adult education at national and international level. In our view, the crisis calls for three specific and different empowerment measures that adult education can provide:

- Employability – updated and relevant competences for the labour market;
- Individual coping skills – in times of change and insecurity;
- Democratic citizenship.

New reforms imply investment in education

Everyone below the age of 30, benefitting from social security payments with none or short educational background

– and without a diagnosis – must enrol in education, and their social security benefit is then reduced by 50 %. This amount matches the size of the public study benefit for Danish students. If they drop out, the consequence may be that they receive no public benefits at all. This is a radical change in the Danish social system and the aim is to leave no one without education and a chance to be part of the labour market. This forms an immense challenge for all the educational institutions, which are keen to enrol new students because of the public funding – as they are also struggling with drop outs and structural problems.

Employability

Non-formal and informal AE should take on the responsibility to build a bridge between the, particularly, young people’s present situation and a future in a formal education institution hopefully leading to employment at a later stage. Another target group for non-formal AE is the mature unemployed adults in need of upgrading and maintenance of competences (basic skills, IT, languages, organization, administration).

Coping skills

AE must support the individual in finding structure, meaning and focus in an everyday life changed because of losing a

job or other negative changes. The key is to provide space for reflection: Studies show that Danish non-formal AE creates learning environments, which are able to break negative social patterns and motivate learning. The aim of the sector must be to continue believing in and insisting on sustainable organisational frameworks in which coping skills can be supported.

Democratic citizenship

Non-formal and informal AE rests upon a democratic culture of participation and involvement and engagement across class, age, gender and ethnic origin. It empowers people to become active citizens. Times of crisis call for a stronger focus on democratic skills and active citizenship to enable people to work against anti-democratic tendencies.

Conclusion

The non-formal sector needs to work together with - not against – the employability agenda with its basic values in hand. The non-formal sector should continue its good work providing people with coping skills for times of life changes. But we should not forget that democratic values are always under pressure in times of crises because emphasis is on economy. The non-formal sector must insist on the importance of democratic citizenship and democratic skills.

Focusing on the Youth

Aaro Harju, Chairperson of the Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA)

Finland has had more economic tolerance than many other countries. In the past few years, however, the government has been forced to make numerous cutbacks in order to save on costs. These savings have influenced every sector of the society, including adult education. In Finland, non-formal adult education consists of five different institutional forms: municipal adult education centres, folk high schools, study centres, summer universities and sports institutes.

There are over 300 institutions in total, attracting about a million students every year (the population of Finland is 5.4 million). The government supports institutes with government shares and assistance with around 164 million euros per year.

Non-formal adult education in crisis

Due to the crisis, the government for non-formal adult education has declined with municipal adult education centres now receiving 9.8 % less than in 2007 while the folk high schools are down 5.5 % and the study centres have seen a 2.7 % decline in funds. The government support of non-formal adult education institutions is bound to index, meaning increased costs are compensated – however, the index increases of 2013 and 2014 have been cancelled,

replaced by special support for specific tasks – such as activities to support the government’s “youth guarantee”, a measure to fight rising unemployment among youngsters. The focus is firmly on vocational education and training. The next budget cut will be 11,2 per cent for the years 2015-2017.

Equality in danger

Many institutions provide 20 % to 76 % more education and training than they get government support for. The reason for this is the high demand for non-formal studies. Institutions fund the education and training with course fees collected from learners.

Finland is geographically a large country with a low population density. Therefore providing education in sparsely populated areas is not cost-effective. As the institutions have been forced to increase the course fees, the poorest people have no chance to participate. The people most in need of education and training are left out. The government has however recently introduced a study voucher which has eased the situation especially when it comes to youth, immigrants and the elderly. With personal study vouchers learners can fund their education and training in non-formal institutions.

Youth in focus

The Finnish government has a strong focus on youth; preventing their unemployment and social exclusion. Young people under 25 are guaranteed a job or a traineeship. Municipal adult education centres and folk high schools are examples of the implementers of the Guarantee. The government has also assigned the non-formal institutions a strong role in organising integration courses for immigrants.

Conclusion

We believe that non-formal adult education has an important role in enhancing people’s skill-levels, updating their know-how and advocating for inclusion, social capital and active citizenship. Non-formal adult education’s value is not lying in the amount of study transcripts – it has a higher purpose. Non-formal adult education enables a truly civilised society, learning through life, democracy and active citizenship. These values have been Nordic adult education’s strengths in past decades and they should not be lost in the future – not even in the times of crisis.

The Effects of the Crisis on the Disadvantaged

La Ligue de l'Enseignement

To restrain difficulties and suspend the rise of poverty and unemployment during the economic crisis, training and education provides opportunity for the individual to start over and to start acquiring knowledge again. Adult Education is a way to meet the growing demands of professional skills in a complex and changing environment.

The effects of the crisis on the (most) disadvantaged

Until recently, the French welfare system has managed to soften the effects of the recession for the most disadvantaged, including low-skilled job seekers. The “active inclusion” approach that the European Commission recommended, allowed for setting up the social welfare (Revenu de Solidarité Active, RSA) in 2008, with two components – the basic RSA (almost all RSA receivers are job seekers registered or not registered at the employment center) and the RSA activity (for poor and often low-skilled workers).

Little room for informal skills

Accompanying measures for RSA receivers, implemented by the General Councils (Conseil Généraux), are mostly oriented towards a social inclusion approach, as the objective of professional development is always dependent on a return to social inclusion: the ability to re-establish so-

cial ties, to be motivated again – to build a professional project and so on.

However, these accompanying courses leave little room for skills acquired outside of traditional education; how can informal knowledge that people have developed (for example in the voluntary sector, in sport clubs, in theater workshops and so on) be valued when the criteria and indicators are based only on employability criteria?

Training, qualification: solutions against exclusion?

In France the rate of school leavers with a low level of education remained at around 13 % between 2000 and 2010. A recent study by INSEE shows that young people leaving school without qualifications have bigger difficulties with integration on the job market than other young people and that these inequalities have longer effects. Thus, among those that left the education system between 2005 and 2010, 11 % of the graduates are unemployed, in comparison to 23 % of high school graduates and 44 % of non-graduates.

Conclusion

Today's qualifying trainings or pre-qualifying trainings are only covered financially if the training objective is validated by prescribers based on la-

bor market needs. This list depends on the local context, depending whether you are in the North or South of the country, if you're on the countryside or in the city.

Here we find a double paradox: On the one hand, institutions push for greater flexibility in jobs and greater geographical mobility – but on the other hand, financial measures that are adapted to local labor market needs can by definition change at least every two or three years. Do we therefore assign the job seekers to a local geographical area and assign them to training for quite a long period (when starting from a low level) for a job that might become obsolete or disappear at the end of the training? We believe that the training should also be based on the personal motivation and interest of every individual.

Adult Education bringing Europe together

Ingrid Schöll, Leiterin VHS-Bonn

At the moment Germany is not experiencing an economic crisis. However, it is very important to mention a whole range of crisis phenomena: the social crisis with a widening gap between the poor and the rich, the crisis concerning the debt – which are hardly able to shoulder the essential expenditure at local level – and the education crisis. The implications for adult education are best illustrated below.

Immigration and integration

For some time now Germany is debating the consequences of the Immigration Act from 2005¹, with regional differences (which tend to increase rather than decrease). This clearly demonstrates that further education resources are needed for integration efforts and for fighting structural challenges – both in formal

schools and for non-formal adult education.

Basic education skills needed

The PISA debate and the PI-AAC results have shown that many young people are leaving school with major deficits in basic education. Often this causes problem when trying to find vocational training positions – and they can't use qualified further education. The study "LEO One", on literacy has shown that more than seven million Germans of working age are functional illiterates. Further education institutions, most of all Adult Education Centers, just reach a small number of the concerned people.

Initiatives to improve the reading and writing skills are urgently needed. This requires additional funds that have not been provided over the last years.

also alter the financial support – are not going to help the mutual understanding of people in Europe. At worst it will reinforce prejudices and stereotypes – and we then risk the economic success in the fight for global markets becoming the sole criteria for political action.

Further education needs to be preserved, developed further and financed to the full extent of the task. Otherwise we will pay for it politically and socially.

¹ On 1 January 2005, a new immigration law came into effect that altered the legal method of immigration to Germany. The political background to the introduction of the new immigration law being that Germany for the first time ever acknowledged to be an "immigration country". Although the practical changes to the immigration procedures were relatively minor, new immigration categories like the ones for highly skilled professionals and scientists have been introduced to attract valuable professionals for the German labour market (Wikipedia).

Conclusion

Above all, education should help bring people in Europe together, dismantle political prejudices, enhance civil society exchange and communicate empathically (which requires the knowledge of the local language). In order to bring Europe closer together it is important that further education is not restricted to paying the costs of repairs for basic education and employability. Such restrictions – that

Nordic Perspectives: Iceland

Antra Carlsen, *Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL)*, Head-coordinator
Sigrún Kristín Magnúsdóttir, *NVL*, Coordinator in Iceland

Unemployment is a long-term structural problem, increased by the global economic crisis. Several of the Nordic countries, especially Finland and Iceland, emphasise the importance of early and targeted guidance.

Iceland overview

Iceland is the Nordic country with the most severe changes, as a result of the economic crisis. The global financial crisis hit the country exceptionally hard in October 2008. In the debate on education among the social partners in Iceland, raising the educational level in the country was emphasised as a means to strengthen the economy. In order to achieve that goal the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) was established to ensure that people in the labour market with little formal education are given the possibility to pursue suitable studies and strengthen their position in the labour market. The Education and Training Service Centre coordinates the development of career guidance for the target group in cooperation with 12 accredited educational providers around the country.

The importance of staying active

In September 2008 unemployment in Iceland was 1,3 %, six months later it had accumu-

lated to 9,1 %. A trend was set when the centre Virkjun (encourage/activate) was established in January 2009 on the Reykjanes peninsula, at the former home of the US base. The centre was a meeting place for people who wanted to transform the ordeal of losing their job into new opportunities in the job market. The employees emphasized the importance of a welcoming atmosphere, as well as structured activities where the focus is on finding new opportunities in a difficult situation.

Theories on unemployment state that it is extremely important that unemployed people remain active. Participation in organised activities is a preventive measure that decreases the risk of depression, family problems or substance abuse.

Job guarantees

During the last decade several actions to reduce unemployment have been initiated by the Icelandic government. The Directorate of Labour has cooperated with the lifelong learning centres around the country in reaching out to the job seekers.

The latest campaign is the program Liðsstyrkur. It is intended to help jobseekers who have used up or will use up their rights to unemployment benefits from the Unemployment Benefits Fund. The

aim is that all the jobseekers who have used up their rights to benefits will be offered jobs or work rehabilitation if they register for the program. 2200 new temporary jobs will be created for long-term jobseekers. Local municipal councils will provide 660 jobs, the government 220 jobs and the private sector 1320 jobs. All those who need work rehabilitation will be offered rehabilitation as well. The objective is that all the jobseekers within this group who register will get job offers. So the aim is that no one will stop getting unemployment benefits without getting such an offer. At the end of February 2013, 200 long-term jobseekers had been employed and one thousand job offerings listed in the database.

Conclusion

The projects have had a major impact. People see hope and have expectations, they realise how important it is not to lose faith in a better future. Virkjun is still operating but the goals have shifted towards providing a platform for various social activities rather than servicing only the unemployed. The aim is to activate and strengthen self-esteem and civic participation.

Adult education in Times of Crises: from Trojan Horses to New Ethics *Brid Connolly, Department of Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth, Co, Kildare Ireland*

Prior to 2008, Ireland was considered a very rich country – the second richest in the world. However, wealth did not trickle down throughout the populations. Indeed, at the height of the wealth, poverty was still a persistent, intractable social problem, and inequality was endemic. Thus, when money and resources were plentiful, they were not used to redress inequality in any meaningful or sustainable way.

Civil society flourishing

During the “wealthy period”, civil society was quite well organised in the work for equality and social justice. Community development projects thrived, especially in urban and suburban areas that were bereft of services, providing child- and elder-care, after-schools clubs, and indeed, spearheading regeneration in locations that were neglected or abandoned by the state. Adult and community education was integral to many of these initiatives, with courses and programmes provided for the support of the workers and clients.

Trojan horse attacks

When the recession detonated in 2008, the most immediate governmental actions were in these areas of civil society, notwithstanding that the causes of the recession

were squarely located in the banking sector, which fuelled a housing bubble. While public spending was targeted, the recession was used as a Trojan Horse to attack the progress made in civil society in the work towards equality. Adult education must re-appraise its position in order to prevent such devastation in the future.

The position of adult education

The first responsibility is to the learners, individually and collectively. Adult learners particularly benefit from *Return to Work* and *Return to Education* initiatives, which target job-seekers. These programmes provide investment for the exchequer funding – the funding reaps rewards for the exchequer, as well as the individual learner. Secondly, “return to learning programmes” open new possibilities for learners, and help them understand that their horizons are much wider than they thought. Finally, these programmes have both long and short term outcomes, as they immediately respond to the needs of the learners – and build their capacity for lifelong learning. This is a quality that enhances the learners’ own lives and also the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Conclusion

Adult educators are in a prime

position to critique the role of education as a social institution, in perpetuating inequality and social reproduction. It is through research that the evidence can be presented that adult education has a unique contribution to make to the fabric of society. Adult education is the most innovative of all teaching and learning developments. While Dewey, Froebel, Montessori, predominate in mainstream education, adult educators call on the learning from feminist education, popular education, critical pedagogy, praxis and social analysis to underpin the practice. The practice is democratic and dialogical, and subverts the power dynamics between the learners and teachers. It is the model for the kind of society that we want for all our citizens. It is a profoundly ethical approach, and it fundamentally examines the role of education in bringing about a more just and equal society.

The Transformation of the Adult Education Sector

in Ireland *Berni Brady, Director, AONTAS*

Currently major structural changes are being made in the area of adult learning in Ireland where for the first time in the history of the state, government policy is focused on streamlining adult education and vocational training within an integrated Further Education and Training Strategy.

This presents major challenges on a number of fronts as the strategy seeks to combine two sectors which have very different histories, ethos, status and funding arrangements. The government has passed legislation to establish a new Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS, with the responsibility for coordinating, funding and monitoring further education and training which will be delivered by 16 local Education and Training Boards. These Boards have been established as a result of the amalgamation of 33 local education authorities and the abolition of the State Training Agency FAS, bringing all further education and training under the remit of one local provider.

The structural changes are taking place in the context of Ireland emerging from the economic crash and the agenda laid down by EU/IMF funders who bailed out the country after the collapse of the banking system.

Developing a Strategy for Further Education and Training

The development of the five year Further Education and Training Strategy which is currently being finalised after an extensive consultation process has once more sparked a debate about the purpose of learning, what it is, how we describe it, what its outcomes are or should be, and how those outcomes can be measured.

The debate is not new. At its core is the question about whether the purpose of education is to produce compliant, responsible, skilled and hard-working citizens or is it to develop our capacity to think, to imagine, to create and transform our society. Can it embrace all of these things and how do we find a balance.

In the current Irish economic climate the emphasis on economic recovery and getting people back to work are paramount and many fears have been expressed by those within the adult learning sector about the possibility of losing the kind of provision that has essentially addressed the social purpose of learning.

Consulting with Stakeholders

The consultation process for the new strategy has involved bringing together a wide

range of stakeholders from across the spectrum of vocational training, formal and non-formal adult education, higher education, employers and business, trade unions, non-government agencies and key government departments. Each of these stakeholders has its own interests, experience, perceptions and language. The challenge has been to find a common core while respecting the differing stances and drawing on the key models of best practice from all sectors.

The new strategy will be signed off by government in April 2014 and an operational Service Plan has been approved by the board of SOLAS to cover the transitional period of 2014. AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, has contributed actively to the development of the Strategy through consulting with its members, advocating for the inclusion of non-formal providers in the legislation and Strategy, and most importantly bringing the voice of the adult learner to the policy table. Berni Brady, Director of AONTAS was appointed to the Board of SOLAS in October 2013 and has a special remit for representing the voice of adult learners.

The Netherlands

The Dutch Case of the Crisis

Dennis Wacht, Member of the Board, LEARN FOR LIFE - Dutch platform for international adult education

Since the Netherlands has an open economy with a small domestic market and a large foreign market, the crisis has affected the Dutch economy seriously. To cushion the heaviest blows of the crisis, the government invested extra in keeping people working and businesses running. As a result, public spending grew considerably while public revenue (from taxes etc.) shrunk. The government has now proposed a package of measures aimed at saving € 18 billion.

Heavy reductions on education funding

Even before the crisis, the government policy was not focused on investments or on increasing the budget for education. The funds for non-formal education in the Netherlands are severely limited since 2000. Lifelong learning has been reduced to a one-way labour market-oriented approach. The social sector has been forced to be more market oriented, citizens are obliged to take own responsibility in terms of employability – and for social participation and integration. Migrants have to pave their own integration in society and students have to pay for their own studies. The adult education sector “supports” this policy by its ideology of active citizenship, participation and lifelong learning. Providers

of non-formal education are depending heavily on a mix of local government and fundraising. EU-grants are more and more complementary for investments in innovation.

Adult learning as a domain for professionals

Old and traditional organisations and institutions are disappearing. New alliances and partnerships are developing. However, the adult education field in the Netherlands is and will stay mainly a professional domain, in the capacity of teachers, trainers, coaches, or in some cases, counsellors or therapists. The majority of the system around Lifelong Learning is actually based on what a small group of policy makers and decision makers find of value to others. Lifelong Learning is far too often still seen as “putting knowledge into empty vessels “. One can say adult education professionals are placed in a new and different role: They have to take the initiatives – there is no longer a government that will do it for them.

Three success factors are crucial: entrepreneurship, collaboration (instead of competition) and on-going professionalization. A large part of the population will soon retire. In about five years it is likely that labour shortages will emerge in many sectors, despite the crisis. This will cre-

ate new demands for cooperation between the economic sector and adult education. Adult education should however primarily focus on the demands of the learner. A strict separation of vocational and adult education is not necessary.

Conclusion

Adult educators are developing key indicators and identifying success factors instead of re-inventing the wheel. There is more focus on social return on investment. It is an illusion to think that adult education can ensure that nobody is left behind in the current economic crisis. Adult education can only provide alternative pathways that substantially may improve the conditions of many excluded people. Professionals need to adhere to their professional craftsmanship based on scientific findings and theory. For such professionals, it is important that there is a platform with space for exchange between professionals, academics, policy makers and adult learners, a place for reflection on existing practices and theories, a place where bottom-up initiatives can take place. In the Netherlands Learn for Life is playing this role, in Europe, EAEA should take this role: Being a network of professionals rather than an umbrella organisation of national organisations.

Adult Education in Times of the Norwegian “Crisis”

Sturla Bjerkaker, Norwegian Association for Adult Learning

There is not an economical crisis in Norway, mostly due to the prosperous oil and gas industry. Fish is also a huge export article. Disappointingly, this is not reflected in the support for adult education. The field can be separated in at least four parts, with some overlap.

Basic skills – and formal competences

Around 25 % of the adult population in Norway does not have proper reading, writing, simple maths and ICT skills. The public authorities on the county level are responsible for offering learning opportunities in basic skills to adults, but distance education schools and study associations can also be providers. The Basic Skills Programme – funding learning at work – is quite successful and has increased the participation.

Further and continuing education

Skills do not last forever and they might not be sufficient for the needs of today. There is “always” a need for updating knowledge and for new skills and competences in, for instance, work places – especially for those that cope with new and different technology. This is probably the biggest field of adult education in Norway today.

Learning for your own benefit – learning for joy

People go to (non-formal) courses and study circles, for instance to language courses, with no other purpose than the joy of learning something new. Here, the study associations (adult learning NGOs), together with a wide range of local NGO’s and CSO’s are the organisers. State support is given when certain conditions are fulfilled.

Learning for active citizenship and democracy

Popular enlightenment has played a crucial role for developing democracy, for almost 200 years. Learning for democracy – in all its facets – might be the biggest challenge in the years to come.

Conclusion: Norway – not economical, but cultural crisis?

The unemployment rate is low. In this situation adult learning and education can easily be seen as a luxury we have no need for. This is of course a very short-term view, but many politicians see it like this. We are fighting to convince politicians that:

- Sooner or later more difficult times may come to Norway.
- With lack of funding today, adult education providers may be gone when bad times do

occur.

- Learning for democracy and active citizenship is important, independent of society’s well-being, and has to be funded.
- Even though the crisis is mostly economical, lack of participation and lack of engagement – and lack of popular education and culture – can be crucial. For Norway, this might be the case today.
- Adult learning and education should be seen holistic and cross-national. Local challenges can be seen – and politically solved – globally.

Adult Education in Times of Crisis - the Portuguese

Situation *António Jorge Oliveira, President of the Direction Board, Kerigma*

The study “Equity and quality of education”, published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that education is the main engine for economic development, and the biggest problem is school dropouts. In this sense, education and training grow in importance – to the extent that the training of citizens is considered a necessary condition for the recovery of sustained growth and for achieving higher levels of economic, social and territorial cohesion – despite the fact that a degree does not guarantee employment.

Validation and guidance

Since the qualification of the labour force is seen as one of the main vulnerabilities of the Portuguese economy and society, it became one of the most serious impediments to the country’s development – and one of the reasons for a low and not convergent productivity level.

Portugal has implemented a succession of significant measures to support employment (internships, occupational measures, support for entrepreneurship and support for self-employment) and training measures (learning courses, education courses and training for young people, to name but a few).

Lifelong learning enabling transition

The relative weight of each type of measure within the overall measures for employment and training is very irregular, but according to the findings in the “Assessment Study of Active Employment Policies – Final Report” (2012) the most effective measures are those that establish a more direct and immediate link between labour and employers, pointing to the eventual removal of programs and educational curricula. Programs with long durations, besides having higher costs, show a lower effectiveness for employability. The lifelong learning strategy is thus to provide tools and develop skills that can facilitate the transition between different moments and situations in life, tailored to the needs required by the job market. From these priorities, a system for personal and professional guidance is being created, replacing the previous system of recognition, validation and certification of competencies.

Conclusion: What about the social aspect?

We see a political-ideological orientation that tends to reinforce the link between economy, work and education, pushing the socialising side of education to the side-lines.

Although there are undeni-

able benefits to education developed in the context of “market learning opportunities”, such strategies do not take into account values of citizenship and citizens’ rights. Lifelong learning therefore cannot fail to integrate the pillars of learning we consider essential; learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. In the words of Paulo Freire, we must get people to realise the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives, as well as the ability to transform this reality, by acting on it.

Exploring crisis reactions in business and education *Jasmina Mirčeva, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, Ljubljana*

Past experiences indicate that the economy and financial sector, at the end of a crisis, recover relatively fast, while the secondary consequences (the implosion of the value-system, the rising exclusion of the vulnerable and marginalised groups) are long-term – and require deeper reforms and changes on a macro-level. The Slovenian experiences indicate that, in redirection of the unfavourable economic and social trends, adult education plays an important role: It is important for personal development and achievement of individual satisfaction.

Models for Education in successful businesses

Recently, research has been conducted in Slovenia on “Effects of the Economic Crisis on the Education for the Labour Market Needs and the Educational Influence as a Factor of Recovering” (2011). The main goal was to examine how companies react to the conditions of a crisis and other difficulties, relating to employees’ education. Several companies from different regions in the country have been analysed and examined.

On the basis of the research results, three typical, hypothetical models of tackling the crisis were found:

1. A model with restrictive policies for saving in all areas.
2. A model with restrictive

policies but insisting on maintaining development of educational activities.

3. A model based on policies for full development of the human potential.

Investing in education pays off

The research shows that organisations with strategies including investment for education, perform better. There is an important association of the internal organizational climate, culture, education, professional requirements and education and development policies and performances of companies. Academic and many research circles in the country take the side of the experiences from some other countries, for instance Scandinavian, where the model of “social rights, education, welfare, participation” is not in contrast with the performances and effects of the economy and enterprises.

Conclusions

It is obvious that the country’s labour market should be reformed somehow, establishing a new balance between the demand for qualifications and the knowledge of the actual job seekers. Adult Education providers can help create that balance, together with companies and the government. There are contrasts between the regular system of

education and the adult education system. Complementarity and synergy should be provided, particularly in times when long-term solutions for the exit from the crisis are expected.

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