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Preface

Lifelong learning is an international topic that has been put on the political agenda and serves as a framework for decision-making processes and increasingly also for academic exchanges and research. As a discourse, it has spread across Europe and many other parts of the world over the past ten years. The ideas of lifelong learning form a spirit and influence national policy strategies, although they vary in interpretation and are carried out differently by each nation. Partly because of this political interest in lifelong learning, adult education as a system and as an academic discipline has seen rapidly growing interest in more international exchange in terms of teaching, academic discourse, and research. Associations such as ESREA and ASEM can be considered driving forces in these exchange processes. The ERASMUS+ programme is one of many programmes providing opportunities for developing and running collaborative projects.

Looking at the international activities on an academic level, we now see discussion and research not only on lifelong learning policies, which have been one focus during the last decade, but also on professionalisation in areas such as teaching, curriculum development, programme planning, and educational management.

One big challenge that many countries are facing is securing the organisational forms of adult and continuing education and securing professionalisation and professionalism. International programmes are one way to strengthen exchange, understanding, and scientific standard building. They are quite rare in the field of adult education, and they are very difficult to carry out, because they need funding, commitment, and close cooperation. Issues of cooperation and joint teaching touch substantial questions of the institutionalisation of adult and continuing education in the world. Cooperation needs shared interests and at the national level may range from joint projects to issues of national lifelong learning policies and strategies, system building in terms of institutions, providers and stakeholders, and financial support. At the academic level, cooperation requires institutionalisation processes, the discussion of shared contents, learning approaches, and outcomes. It needs a balance of shared contents and national specialties that fit into the history of the different countries. It needs aspects to share and an appreciation of differences but also a willingness to value special developments in each country.

There are certain challenges on the students' side: They must be motivated to learn English and practice it as a shared international language. This is connected to more challenges: Studying in a foreign language requires a motivation to explain more and more intensively, to understand 'the others' and to put more emphasis on interpretation activities, because people do not necessarily have the same understanding and shared interpretation patterns.

At the level of teaching staff, it is to be highly appreciated that experts and colleagues from different universities in different countries come together to develop contents, quality standards, and learning approaches.

This book reflects a special part of the Würzburg Winter School: the Joint Module COMPALL. The contributions in it reflect the activities of everybody involved in this Joint Module. Putting the module together has been a challenge, especially for the teaching staff.

Furthermore, the book combines two substantial perspectives: internationalisation in higher education and in adult education. Using various examples, it shows how important it is to combine these perspectives when trying to professionalise adult education as a field and especially as a discipline.

COMPALL is an innovative and unique approach that uses comparison as a basis for reflection and analysis in teaching. The contributions give interesting insights into the curriculum including modern forms of digital learning and shared standards of content.

The evaluation provides inside views of the interests, challenges, and differences of students from different countries.

The volume is divided into three chapters: (1) Internationalisation in higher education, (2) Internationalisation of higher education: The case of adult education, and (3) Internationality of higher education: The example of COMPALL.

It is already the second book to come out of the EU-funded project Winter School in Würzburg, which has been very successful in many ways.