

Comparing Professionalisation in Adult and Continuing Education

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Adult education and its key actors in academic professionalisation – a comparison between China, India and the European Union

Abstract

Understandings of adult education and its academic professionalisation vary by country. In this paper, China, India, and the European Union will be compared regarding the meaning of adult education and the ways in which these understandings have been developed. The focus is on academic professionalisation, which is also going to be clarified for all three countries. After discussing each country separately, the comparison will focus on similarities and differences. This includes the analysis of the key actors in academic professionalisation at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The results provide an overview of the three countries and lead to the final conclusion that even though the topics are similar, the country-specific ways of development offer different opportunities.

Introduction

Each country has a different understanding of adult education: To be able to compare and discuss the future of adult education, it is necessary to discuss different understandings. This paper presents different countries and their definitions and meanings of adult education. To be able to understand a country and its education system, the historical development of the education sector, with a focus on adult education, needs to be considered. The historical development shows its impact on the education systems as well as on academic professionalisation in each country. In this article, we not only discuss the adult education sector as a whole but also identify the most important actors in adult education in each country.

Academic professionalisation is, on the one hand, understood as an ongoing improvement process with high-level indicators for adult education as a whole, for example, a focus on the implementation of quality assurance systems in the institutions, as well as the improvement of programme structures. On the other hand, academic professionalisation can be understood as a biographical approach focusing on the individual development of adult educators or students. Egetenmeyer und Schüssler (2014) describe academic professionalisation as a development of structural factors, including university-based degree programmes, which have

changed through the Bologna reform and are now diverse all over Europe. An important issue for academic professionalisation at universities is the connection to the field of work of adult education. The biographical approach is focused on the individual development of competences. This cannot be identified as a specific development because it could happen in different ways: for example, first theoretical and then practical professionalisation, or via continuing education after people already started working as adult educators, and so on. But it is not just academic training that matters for individual professionalisation; other programmes and field experiences, including informal learning processes, need to be considered as well (cf. Egetenmeyer & Schüssler, 2014, pp. 29, 32ff.).

China

Definition of adult education and its purpose

The ancient idea, and hence the original understanding, of adult education in China was founded in the Han dynasty. Adult education was created to teach people how to become a politician or leader. Modern adult education started with the founding of the People's Republic of China. In the face of the illiterate population, which accounted for more than 80 per cent of the nation's population, the government issued a call for 'developing literacy education and gradually reducing the illiterates.' (Adult Education, online) The *Guidelines for Educational Reform and Development in China* promulgated in 1993 pointed out: 'Adult education is a new education system which plays an important role both in the development of conventional school education toward lifelong education and in the continuous enhancement of the national quality and in the promotion of economic, social development.' (Adult Education, online) The systems of adult education are: adult primary education (including literacy classes), secondary education, adult education, and higher education, providing remote, correspondence, and academic instruction (Education in China: A Survey, online).

Historical development of academic professionalisation in adult education

2,500 years ago, China established a tradition of an education system mainly based on the ideas of Confucius, which has influenced the Chinese people. This was the first idea for adult education in China. Chinese ancient official education was called *taixue*, which means 'greatest study or learning', sometimes called 'imperial academy' or 'imperial university' (cf. Ban, 1962, p. 56). Unlike classic European universities, they were influenced by Confucius and Chinese literature

and designed for high-level civil service, so the ancient adult education was created for training politicians (cf. Wang, 2013, p. 7).

As Hayhoe points out: 'In conscious reaction to the narrow fragmentation and exclusivist orientation towards expertise of Soviet patterns, Mao directed in 1957 that "our educational policy must enable everyone to develop morally, intellectually, and physically and become a worker with socialist consciousness and culture". Furthermore, "education must serve proletarian politics and be combined with productive labour."' (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 72)

This education system is not suitable for human-oriented education. And the educational content very easily falls behind the times. The old system no longer lived up to professional needs. China's educational system is gradually reforming these years. The academic degree system now features bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as post-doctoral research. As Ouyang points out, 'a relatively rational higher education system was set up with different subjects, different aspects, and different levels' (Ouyang, 2004, p. 143).

Since 1980, China has formulated a series of laws and regulations. Such laws and regulations to promote the development of education, to protect the rights of citizens to receive education, and to promote universal education is an important safeguard. And in recent years, government expenditure on education continues to increase, establishing a sound mechanism to ensure the priority of education development. Government is controlling education by kind of playing a supporting role (cf. Chen, 2013, p. 105).

India

Definition of adult education and its purpose

India has a special definition of adult education, which has grown from different social, economic, political, and historical conditions. Although the definition of adult education has changed as the concept of adult education has undergone significant changes over time, adult literacy remains the core concern on which Indian adult education is defined to this day (cf. Shah, 1999, p.4). In India, the term *adult education* normally refers to adult literacy promotion activities. The variations in the definition of adult education in the Indian context can be understood in three phases: ancient India, British India, and contemporary India.

In ancient Indian society, adult education followed a traditional approach to literacy. It was a process of learning, which was in the form of religious and other community activities such as storytelling, religious operas, reading of religious scripture, village markets, and different forms of traditional performing and arts.

The process of learning was largely oriented to the needs of the community and aimed at making an individual a fit member of the community (cf. Syam, 1981, p. 1).

During British rule (eighteenth and nineteenth century), as a colonised nation, India had a vast illiterate, poor, and marginalised population. Therefore, the main thrust of adult education during colonial rule revolved around basic literacy. The purpose of basic literacy was to educate illiterate adults using the core curriculum of the 3Rs – that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic – to make them aware of their rights, to eradicate poverty, and to disseminate scientific knowledge. Most significantly, adult education was planned and designed as a community development programme. It was also a chief instrument to motivate the masses to fight against colonial rule and for the freedom of India (cf. Shah, 1999, p. 3).

Adult education in contemporary India is considered to encompass more than imparting the 3Rs to illiterate adults and community development. During the past century, adult education in India absorbed several national and international theories, practices, and approaches, leading to the emergence of broader concept. So, in the context of such global influences, adult education in India has adopted a new nomenclature, purpose, and definition. Nowadays, adult education is defined as lifelong education to broaden the horizon of the people (cf. Batra, 1980, p. 3). It is a process of acquiring knowledge, learning from daily living, and developing work-oriented skills (vocational education) to overcome economic deprivation and to create awareness of social disparities and political engagement (Adult Education India, online). Moreover, it has become a discipline of research and study. Thus, it is possible to think of the distinctiveness of adult education in a pluralist country like India, where it is defined primarily in relation to basic literacy, as acquiring desirable knowledge pertaining to civic needs and adopting political and occupational skills to become a productive part of the system (cf. Paintal, 2006, p. 56).

Historical development of academic professionalisation in adult education

India developed a variety of adult education programmes in the past, with continuous shifts in focus and content. Along with universal elementary education, adult education always had a place in India's national discourse and policy deliberations due to the importance and overriding priority of literacy (cf. NLM, 2008, p. 6). But there has barely been any serious initiative for academic professionalisation in adult education. In fact, adult education remained outside the domain of professionalisation (cf. Shah, 2006, p. 263). However, there are certain milestones that contributed to the development of academic professionalisation in adult education, which varies depending on the political circumstances in India.

During the phase of the Indian National Congress (INC), the Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) was established in 1939 to promote adult education in India through seminars, conferences, workshops, training programmes, publications, and the dissemination of relevant information pertaining to the subject. In 1949, the Central Board of Education suggested a new and comprehensive concept of adult education known as *Social Education*, which included literary work, cultural and recreational activities, and civic education. The Union Minister of Education provided supporting services to the programme by making a budget allocation. India's 'Five-Year Plan' (1951–1956) and the 1968 National Policy of Education (NPE) made recommendations to emphasise the planning, implementation, and supervision of adult education programmes. Departments of adult education were set up in universities, and certificate courses were offered. In 1956, the National Fundamental Education Centre (NFEC) was established with a grant from UNESCO to produce research and professional literature (cf. Shah, 1999, pp. 343–44).

But soon after the Janata Party (JP) took over the premiership in 1977, the highest priority in educational planning was assigned to adult education along with the universalisation of elementary education. In 1978, the first nationwide adult education initiative, *National Adult Education Programme* (NAEP), was launched. The main objective of NAEP was to organise adult education programmes, with literacy as an indispensable component (cf. Batra, 1980, pp. 8–9).

With the change in government and the return of INC in 1980, the Government of India (GoI) formulated *NPE-1986*, which was a turning point as it became a strategy document to rekindle the literacy movement in India. Consequently, the GoI launched the National Literacy Mission (NLM) in 1988 for the purpose of imparting functional literacy to the 80 million illiterate adults by 1995 (cf. Shah, 1999, p. 347). Most of the adult education programmes were made more professional to some extent after the launch of the NLM by conceiving a standardised training curriculum for the functionaries acting at various levels in terms of content, duration, certification, and so on. A few universities started offering regular courses leading to certification, graduation, post-graduation, and doctoral degrees in adult education. This promoted basic standards for adult education professionals. Besides, large numbers of adult educators got involved in diverse activities such as teaching, training research counselling, and programme planning and management to professionalise adult education with a view to its effectiveness. In 2009, based on a reformed vision to create *Literate India*, a new adult education programme named *Saakshar Bharat* was formulated with four broader objectives: imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates; acquiring

equivalency to formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programmes; and promoting a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education (MHRD-Saakshar Bharat, online).

European Union

Considering the history of the European Union countries, with all their wars against each other, the goal of the European Union itself is easier to understand. This is because the European Union was created to achieve the political goal of peace, but its dynamism and success springs from its involvement in economics (cf. Lima & Guimarães, 2011, pp. 3–7). The following paragraphs are an attempt to discuss a corporate understanding of adult education in the European Union.

Definition of adult education and its purpose

In the eighteenth century, adult education emerged; since the twentieth century (mostly after World War 2), adult education has been growing (cf. Lima & Guimarães, 2011, pp. 18–19). But adult education is and will continue to be widely diverse in nature, involving a rich assortment of actors trying to influence the idea of professionalisation in their own countries or throughout the European Union.

There are regional differences in Europe, but there is also overlap. The Council of the European Union states that ‘adult learning is a vital component of the lifelong-learning continuum, covering the entire range of formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities, general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training’ (Council Resolution 2011/C 372/01, p. 3). According to the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), adult education is key for enhancing skills, competences, and social participation in Europe. It includes general and liberal adult education as well as vocational education and training; the focus is not only on basic skills but also on personal development and active citizenship (cf. EAEA-Report, 2013, p. 10). CEDEFOP papers show a similar definition, where adult education includes general or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes (cf. CEDEFOP, 2008, p. 25). Overall, the definitions are different but the meaning is similar.

Historical development of academic professionalisation in adult education

The European Union and its strategies and corporate developments need to be mentioned shortly to give an overview of the discussion about adult education in

the EU context. The 1957 Treaty of Rome mentions ‘assistance for occupational re-training to ensure productive employment’, which goes in the direction or can be part of adult education. During the 1970s, the EU discussion on adult education was started indirectly by the influence on education through programmes like the European Social Fund and so on. In 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht mentioned quality assurance as an important focus for cooperation, as well as harmonisation in education between the member states. In 1996, the European Union concentrated on lifelong learning as a specific topic. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam included the restructuring of established education programmes. This treaty was supported by the Luxembourg Summit (1997) and Vienna Summit (1998), which espoused the goals of employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, and equal opportunities (cf. Lima & Guimarães, 2011, pp. 69ff.). In 1999, the Bologna Process started, with all ministries of education from all member states working together to implement a European Higher Education Area. The most important regulations are 1) a three-cycle structure of postsecondary degrees (bachelor–master–PhD), which should be comparable between all signing states, 2) the European Credit Transfer System to make different classes, courses, and study programmes comparable all over Europe, 3) mobility opportunities for students, researchers, and teachers, and 4) stronger visibility of European Union topics at all European universities to foster European thinking (cf. Bologna Process, 2013/C 251 E/04, online).

The Lisbon Strategy (2000) stated the objective that the European Union become the world’s most dynamic and competitive economy by 2010 through the modernisation of the European social model, a decentralised approach concerning its member states, and transparency in the education sector, for instance through implementing the European Qualification Framework, which enables all member states to compare the outcomes of the different formal education systems. Following the key ideas of the Lisbon Strategy, the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* aimed to foster active citizenship and to promote employability. Other supportive documents are the 2010 *European Commission document about Education and Training*, the 2006 document *Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn*, and the 2007 *Action Plan on Adult Learning: It is always a good time to learn*. From 2007 to 2013, lifelong learning programmes were implemented in EU member states (cf. Lima & Guimarães, 2011, pp. 77–110). The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth acknowledges lifelong learning and skills development as key elements (cf. Council Resolution, 2011, pp. 1–2). The *European Agenda for Adult Learning* (2012) builds on the *Europe 2020 strategy*, the *Action Plan on Adult Learning 2008–2010* and the *ET2020*. The priorities are: 1) to make lifelong learning and mobility reality, 2) to improve the quality and efficiency of

education and training, 3) to promote equity, social cohesion, active citizenship through adult learning, 4) to enhance the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments, and 5) to improve the knowledge base and monitoring of the adult learning sector (EAEA-Priorities, online).

Functioning of key actors in adult education at the macro, meso, and micro levels

When discussing different understandings of adult education and the historical development of academic professionalisation in adult education, it is also important to talk about the key actors. The following table gives a short overview of key actors in the three countries and shows that the structure and the included institutions are similar although the function and the power of the institutions are different.

Table 1: Comparison of Key Actors in China, India, and the European Union

	China	India	European Union (EU)
MACRO	Government	Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), University Commission Grant (UGC) the apex statutory body of higher education in India, Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA)	EU member states/ EU institutions: EAEA and CEDE-FOP
MESO	Universities/ academic colleges	Universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Institute of Peoples Learning Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), State Resource Centres (SRC's)	Universities/ adult education institutions
MICRO	Students	Adult educators/students	Adult educators/ students

At first glance, the key actors look similar, but there are important differences and background information that need to be mentioned, for instance regarding the ways in which the levels can influence each other. The information about the influence of the levels can help us understand the development of adult education and its difficult and long-lasting process of professionalisation.

China

At the macro level, the government plays an important role. China is home to about one-fifth of the world's population. To rule such a big country, the government should have very strong controlling powers. Based on this power, the

government can decide over the education system. All the efforts are aimed at further improving the modern national education system, developing the system of lifelong education, and building a modernised socialist education system with Chinese characteristics (cf. National report, p. 8).

In earlier years, after the founding of communist China, the government had the power to micro-manage all Chinese universities, which didn't have any right to decide themselves. Nowadays, Chinese universities have more development space, but they are still under the control of the government. From the Chinese universities' point of view, the easiest way of managing the different disciplines is to establish academic professionalisation, which would function like a frame. The contemporary social division of labour is getting smaller and becoming more professional. Employment trends have diversified. According to the diversity of career needs, Chinese universities have established and divided their disciplines by different occupations. At the micro level, students are the main participants. Given China's strong economic development, the number of college students is increasing rapidly. For example, from 1998 to 2001, the number of master's students in China increased from 150,000 to 290,000, meaning an increase of 93 per cent. From 2001 to 2003, PhD students increased from 45,000 to 77,000, meaning an increase of 71 per cent (cf. Ouyang, 2004, p. 146). Every individual will influence the professionalisation of adult education. More and more students are participating at this level, making rapid advances towards the development of academic professionalisation.

India

At the macro level, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) works through the Department of School Education & Literacy (SE&L). The department of SE&L is responsible for upholding the essence and role of adult education as articulated in the 1986 and 1992 National Policies on Education (NPE). It undertakes various adult education schemes, programmes, and initiatives, and promotes the same along with universal elementary education. Secondly, the University Grant Commission (UGC), a statutory body of the Government of India and the only grant-giving agency in the country, supports the institutionalisation of adult education programmes, such as the establishment of university departments and the development of accredited courses at certificate and degree level (MHRD-UGC, online). However, the progress of academic professionalisation in adult education varies depending on the policy adopted by UGC (cf. Shah, 2013, p. 6). On the other hand, IAEA, a pioneering national-level voluntary organisation, promotes adult education as a field of practice and discipline of study.

At the meso level, the universities, institutes of peoples learning such as JSS, SRCs, and NGOs are the key actors to promote academic professionalisation in adult education. The universities are pioneers in the process of professionalisation. Certain universities in India made efforts to strengthen adult education as a professional field of practice before the UGC intervention, such as the Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extension (DACEE) at Delhi University. Besides, there are 20 more universities in India that have departments of adult education, including SNDT Women's University, NEHU, and so forth. Likewise, the SRCs are mandated to provide academic and technical resource support to the ongoing adult and continuing education programme through the development and production of material and training modules (MHRD-Resource Centre of State, online). Vocational training for non-literates, neo-literates, and school dropouts is provided by JSS. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are neither part of the government nor conventional for-profit businesses, are funded by governments to work in the field of adult education (MHRD-Voluntary Agencies, online).

The micro level includes adult educators, students, individual institutions, and social workers. Efforts are made at the individual level to promote the professionalisation of adult education. Likewise, adult educators play a crucial role in the development of professional courses and several other initiatives in designing a quality adult education programme, but not much attention is paid to enhancing the professional qualification of adult educators. There is no separate professional training programme for adult educators. There is a need to set up basic qualification and employment conditions to validate adult educators (cf. Shah, 2010, pp. 4–6).

European Union

At the macro level, the European Union and its institutions are able to influence the meso and micro levels. There are many regulations and guidelines governing the relations between the European Union and its member states. One guiding principle is called subsidiarity, which ensures that decisions are made close to the citizens. That means that the European Union takes action when it is more effective than a national government (Europa – Subsidiarity, online). As an example of the work done by the EU institutions, the EAEA and the CEDEFOP are mentioned. The mission of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is to promote the integration of the individual in society through professional and civic development (EAEA-Mission, online). The mission of CEDEFOP is to develop VET policies and contribute to their implementation (cf. CEDEFOP, n.d.).

At the micro level, there are, on the one hand, the universities focusing on adult education and the adult education institutions. Both of these key actors play a major role in the academic professionalisation in adult education, because they educate or train the adult educators and enable institutions of further development. Universities are able to decide on their own because of their autonomy. The universities are able to define their institutional profile, decide whom they are going to employ, make direct connections to sponsors, and so on (cf. Europe – University Autonomy, online). The economy, the labour market, and the government also have an influence on the academic sector. When concentrating on academic professionalisation in adult education, it is important to mention the different adult education institutions, which are also interested in professionalisation. Austria is a good example, featuring an institution responsible for the professionalisation of these adult education institutions. Quality management of adult education institutions is a special focus here. A certificate including an assessment has been implemented (Ö-Cert = ‘Austrian Certificate’), which functions like a quality certificate (Ö-Cert 2014, online). Professionalisation programmes for individual adult educators were redesigned as well. The Academy of Continuing Education, (*Weiterbildungsakademie*) was established in corporation with the University of Klagenfurt to professionalise prospective and current adult educators via a certificate programme and give them the opportunity to join a master’s programme afterwards (Prokopp & Luomi-Messerer, 2010).

Conclusion

There are many different meanings to adult education in China, India, and the European Union. However, in all of these countries, the academic professionalisation of adult education is taking global significance despite changing concepts and the introduction of various policies and programmes.

Considering the different definitions of adult education a comparison is possible (see table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Definitions of Adult Education

European Union	<i>‘Adult learning is a vital component of the lifelong-learning continuum, covering the entire range of formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities, general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.’ (Council Resolution 2011/C 372/01, p. 3)</i>
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China	<i>Adult education is a new education system which plays an important role both in the development of conventional school education toward lifelong education and in the continuous enhancement of the national quality and in the promotion of economic, social development.’ (China Embassy, online)</i>
India	<i>Adult education today is considered to encompass more than imparting the 3R’s (reading, writing, and arithmetic) to illiterate adults and community development. Nowadays, adult education is defined as lifelong education to broaden the horizon of the people (cf. Batra, 1980, p. 3).</i>

The comparison of the definitions makes similarities in wordings visible; for example, lifelong learning is mentioned in all three definitions. Altogether the countries focus on lifelong learning as a new attitude of living. A difference can be noticed in the way the terms adult education or adult learning are used. In EU countries the term *adult learning* seems to be synonymous with the term *adult education*. In China, the main focus of adult education is on professional development for everyone, whereas adult education is seen in the same way of understanding education as a whole. In India, the emphasis is on growth and development in all of adult education, not only in the area of literacy. The countries of the European Union concentrate on personal development besides professional development and informal learning as a new challenge.

Although China, India, and the European Union are facing different challenges, all of them focus on the development of the adult education sector, which seems to be underestimated in all countries. In India and China, it can be inferred that the concept, purpose, definition, policy, and practices of adult education as an academic profession vary, depending on the prevailing political system and the country’s socioeconomic development. In India, earlier adult education was designed for societal and community development. It has only been in recent times that adult education is associated with individual growth and viewed as a discipline to be studied. Learning used to take place through religious and community institutions in India and China. And the aforementioned institutions had a stronger influence in China and India than in the European Union.

The multi-level analysis of key actors shows that in spite of centralised governmental regulations, India has a decentralised level of policy and institutions that govern and influence the development of adult education as an academic profession. Government regulations in China are much stronger than in the EU countries. The governmental structure seems to be much more centralised in China, whereas in EU countries, the organisation of academic professionalisation is decentralised because of the autonomy enjoyed by European universities. In some EU countries, especially in Germany, regulations for further development,

including professionalisation as a process, were also created by adult education institutions themselves. Maybe the Bologna-Process can also be seen as an influence from policy makers and as a centralising factor. Finally, it can be stated that the structure of the levels and their key actors seem to be similar, although the power of the key actors in each country varies.

Comparing countries and their ideas helps each country to become more creative when developing their own adult education systems. Development is comparable but not transferable. The discussion shows different ways of dealing with the challenges. Further opportunities are seen in cross-country collaborations to learn from each other and understand different developmental ways of living. However, professionalising adult education in India, for example, continues to be challenging because adult education still remains as programme to eradicate illiteracy, unlike in European countries, where adult education is recognised as a profession.

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The curriculum of study programmes for adult educators – the study cases of Italy, Germany and Portugal¹

Abstract

In this comparative case study, the authors take two different types of perspectives into account: one perspective centres on the competences associated with adult education trainers; the second perspective focuses on an approach to the trainers' curriculum in adult education, regarding their differences and similarities. The body of European research on competences is large. After more than ten years of studies and projects, we have some common frameworks and precise directions. In particular, the path lead by Knowles (1997) in the 1970s marked an important aspect: the adult educator is not a teacher but a guide and facilitator, both in a formal learning context and in an informal or non-formal situation. From a curriculum point of view, we can identify a German and an Italian effort in building up a common core curriculum in adult education, which includes contents and ECTS perspectives. In Portugal, the trainer's profile and curriculum have evolved a lot: he/she is no longer just someone who has the pedagogical ability to communicate a certain type of knowledge and evaluate learning outcomes but an inspiring and creative guide. The comparison further shows a similar perspective regarding the competences of an adult educator in the countries considered.

Introduction

The role of adult educators depend on the state and the countries from a political and a cultural point of view. The great importance of lifelong learning for the growth of each European country shows us the central importance of professionalising the adult educator.

1 The article represents the work of all authors, although Introduction, Conclusion and Part 1 are by Vanna Boffo, Part 2 is by Kathrin Kaleja, Part 3 is by Khulud Sharif-Ali, Part 4 is by Joana Fernandes.

In this sense, the types of jobs are different according to national classifications of occupation, where we have it. There are countries that have this and others that don't. In Germany, it depends very much on the flexible needs of the economy and the adult/lifelong learning contexts. In Italy and other countries, classifications include: trainer, programme planner, curriculum designer, career counsellor, manager, marketing/media/PR specialist, project manager, researcher, administrator in social firms, and the like. The role of professionals is an important part of the social economy. On one side, we have many different jobs, but on the other side, the activities are less different. The fields of activities, as agreed in the European study on the competency profile of adult educators (Buiskool, Broek, van Lakerveld, Zarifis, & Osborne, 2010, p. 35), can be differentiated as follows: 'Monitoring and evaluation, Counselling and guidance activities, Programme development activities, ICT support activities, Network activities, Administrative support activities, Marketing and Public Relations, Management of quality, Human resource management, Financial management, Need assessment, Preparation of courses, Facilitation of learning'.

The term *competence* is defined as: part of skills, part of knowledge, and part of responsibility. It is possible to divide competences into a lot of categories, for instance, generic and specific (Buiskool et al., 2010, p. 11). For example, it is possible to divide competence into personal and professional competence. It depends on the point of view of research. For a teacher or for a trainer, we can say there are three fields of competences: 1) relational and communicative competences, 2) didactical competences, and 3) disciplinary competences. In Europe these types of competence are studied and applied in the curricula of university study programmes. The article will observe the situation in three countries: Italy, Germany, and Portugal.

The Case Study of Italy

In Italy, the study programme of the adult education course is divided into two different levels: the first one is a bachelor's course named 'Sciences of Education and Formation', three years long; the second one is the master's course in 'Sciences of Adult Education and Continuing Training', two years long. This master's course was implemented in 2001, when the new policy on the length of degree programmes in higher education completely changed the face of the Italian university (Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, 1999).

Table 1: Study Programmes in Adult Education (Source: Author's Own)

Type of Degree	Curriculum/ didactical contents	Methods	General information	Standard
Three-year bachelor's Bachelor of science in education and formation	Pedagogy and educational methodology; philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology; history, geography, economics and law; education and integration of disabled people	Seminars, Laboratories, Workshops, Lessons, practical experiences/internship, final thesis	Entrance requirements: secondary school (with admission test), duration: 3 years training CFU for key competences: 180 CFU practical experiences: 300 hours	High level Evaluation quality system
Two-year degrees Master of science in adult education and continuing training or two-year degrees in pedagogical sciences	Pedagogy and educational methodology; psychology, sociology, and philosophy; law, economics, and politics	Seminars, Laboratories, Workshops, Lessons, practical experiences/internship, final thesis	Entrance requirements: Three-year bachelor's, duration: 2 years, training CFU for key competences: 120 CFU practical experiences: 100 hours	Very high level Evaluation quality system

A general description of the profile could be: The definition of professionals only includes those profiles for whom adult learning constitutes the primary or most significant source of income. Adult learning includes activities aimed at recovering educational skills also within professionalisation pathways. The main areas of adult learning are as follows:

- Adult basic education (EQF 1 and 2): In this field, most services are carried out by state schools, while some are promoted by local councils or voluntary associations (especially those which support immigrants).
- Secondary education (EQF 3): Although the majority of initiatives in this field are promoted by state schools, private institutes are also present.
- Postsecondary education (EQF 4): In this field, one-year higher education courses combine with technical educational institutes offering two-year

courses, both basically aimed at the training of skilled workers. Most initiatives in this field take place in the private sector.

Professionals working in all of the above areas are the equivalent of teachers in each of the corresponding school levels. In postsecondary education, professional technicians and trainers are also common. For this type of professionals, the labour market requires both a bachelor's and a master's degree, but a specific certificate in adult education is not necessary. In the case of formal education, the teachers are the same for children and young adolescents. There aren't any specific preparations, although, in the past year, we expected a change from a legislative point of view (Decree of the President of Republic, n. 263/2012). Because of the new rules, there will be an innovative organisation from the didactical point of view for awarding certificates of primary or secondary school to adults. In this way, it will be possible to increase the level of teaching and learning in the formal adult education system.

Another important variation is the national system for recognising prior learning at the level of the competences of an adult worker (Legislative Decree n. 13/2013). We expect that these legislative modifications will have many effects on the labour market for the adult educator job profile. Also in this case, policy changes will have an effect on adult education because it will be possible to reach a new level of reflection on learning and teaching.

The competences of a trainer are diverse; partly dependent on the labour market and partly fixed by the curriculum of the course of study. A trainer could be a tutor, a teacher of organised learning units, or an adult educator in a specific context in firms or in a private school team. The competences are: *communication skills, learning skills, making judgements, and applying transdisciplinary knowledge* (Knowles, 1973). If we focus our attention on competences as the outcomes at the end of the master's level, we can set the competences of a professional at 6–7 EQF. In this case, we can speak about a profile as teacher or manager or project manager. In Italy, there are lots of professionals in adult education, and the most important distinction is between formal and non-formal education. In the first sector, the principal figure is the teacher; in the second field, the main figures are in-company training managers, human resource managers, experts, and consultants. In every situation, the profile of an adult educator or teacher of adult people is that of a facilitator, a trainer who is very close to the students. Malcolm Knowles (1973, 1997), Carl Rogers (1980), and Donald Schön (1987) wrote in a specific way about the type of teacher in the learning situation with adult learners. At the roots of each of these scholar's thoughts was the lesson of Dewey's pedagogy (1938).

Which types of competences are at the base of the adult educator profile in Italy? As the report of Research voor Beleid (Buiskool et al., 2010) stressed, there are generic competences and specific competences. The following description of competences is a good analysis of the competences that are described in guidelines of university-level courses of study, or better building up the professionalization of the educational job with the adult it is necessary to research them. The generic competences are considered fundamental to any job in the education sector in a rapidly changing world:

- Personal competence in systematic reflection on one's own practice, learning, and personal development: **being a fully autonomous lifelong learner.**
- Interpersonal competence in communicating and collaborating with adult learners, colleagues and stakeholders: **being a communicator, team player, and networker.**
- Competence in being aware of and taking responsibility for the institutional setting in which adult learning takes place at all levels (institute, sector, the profession as such, and society): **being responsible for the further development of adult learning.**
- Competence in making use of one's own subject-related expertise and the available learning resources: **being an expert.**
- Competence in making use of different learning methods, styles, and techniques, including new media, and being aware of new possibilities and e-skills and assessing them critically: **being able to deploy different learning methods, styles, and techniques in working with adults.**
- Competence in empowering adult learners to learn and support themselves in their development into, or as, fully autonomous lifelong learners: **being a motivator.**
- Competence in dealing with group dynamics and heterogeneity in the background, learning needs, motivation, and prior experience of adult learners: **being able to deal with heterogeneity and groups** (Buiskool et al., 2010, p. 12)

Specific competences are dependent on the type of job and the role of the employer; in that sense, it would be necessary to distinguish between the specific competences linked directly to a professional as teacher, trainer, or educator on the one hand, and the competences linked to a manager or project manager on the other. In the first case, the specific competences of a specialist of the learning process are:

- Competence in assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivations, and wishes of adult learners: **being capable of assessment of adult learners' learning needs.**

- Competence in selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods, and content for the adult learning process: **being capable of designing the learning process.**
- Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: **being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and a stimulator of adult learners' own development.**
- Competence to continuously monitor and evaluate the adult learning process in order to improve it: **being an evaluator of the learning process.**
- Competence in advising on career, life, further development and, if necessary, the use of professional help: **being an advisor/counsellor.**
- Competence in designing and constructing study programmes: **being a programme developer** (Buiskool et al., 2010, p. 13).

For managers or project managers, competences in the financial field or in human resources will be very important. In these last professional profiles, the following competences are required:

- Competence in managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of the provision: **being financially responsible.**
- Competence in managing human resources in an adult learning institute: **being a (people) manager.**
- Competence in managing and leading the adult learning institute in general and managing the quality of the provision of the adult learning institute: **being a general manager.**
- Competence in marketing and public relations: **being able to reach the target groups, and promote the institute.**
- Competence in dealing with administrative issues and informing adult learners and adult learning professionals: **being supportive in administrative issues.**
- Competence in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments: **being an ICT-facilitator** (Buiskool et al., 2010, p. 13).

These types of competences are at the base of the profile of graduates of bachelor's and master's programmes in adult education in Italy. We may say the general competences are built at the bachelor's level and the specific competences, with a specialisation towards the 'expert of the learning processes' or towards the 'expert in human resources managing/project Manager', are built at the master's level.

The lists of competences reflect, over the course of academic study in Italy, the Dublin descriptors (Bologna Follow-Up Group, 2005), because these last ones serve as the basis on which the learning outcomes of the Italian first- and second-cycle

degree courses are structured. The elements of the Dublin descriptors are: 1) knowledge and understanding, 2) applying knowledge and understanding, 3) making judgements, 4) communication skills, and 5) learning skills. They are general descriptors, and they are linked to the learning objects of both the course of study and the single discipline. In Italy, the Bologna process (1999) began with the reform of the university in the same year, and the process continues until today. It is possible to see the correspondence between the Dublin descriptors of each course (defined in the European Higher Education Area) and the European Qualification Framework descriptors (EQF at 6–7 Levels).

In this way, the qualification system in Italy guarantees communication between knowledge, capabilities, and competences. The system exists in the European Higher Education Area, the difficulties correspond to the modifications of the global system and the variability of the labour market. The problem is the link between the study programmes and the real situation on the labour market. Is there a mismatch? Further research is needed to improve the professionalisation of educators working with adults.

Competences in the Curricula for Adult Educators in Germany

In Germany, university curricula in adult education are influenced by the Bologna process and the switch to bachelor's and master's degrees. Through the Bologna process, several changes occurred in the study programmes such as the implementation of ECTS points. The first university-level programmes in adult education were established in the 1970s as diploma (*Diplom*) studies. The long tradition of the five-year *Diplom* degree and the evolving changes caused by the Bologna Process created insecurity regarding the competences of adult educators (cf. Kollmannsberger & Fuchs, 2009, p. 48). The main doubt is that six semesters of undergraduate study might not be enough to develop the reflexivity of adult educators.

Study programmes aim to develop the competences, knowledge, and abilities of students to become adult educators capable of acting professionally in the sector of adult education. In order to reach this aim, the discourse in adult education since the 1970s produced several approaches towards developing professional adult educators and their role: The competence-based approach is one approach among others towards the development of adult educators. The approach and also the policy discourse produced several different definitions of competences. One of those is the definition of Erpenbeck and Rosenstiel (cf. 2003, p. 15). They define competences as dispositions for self-governed acting. The competence-based approach is represented by Fuhr (1991), for example. It is based on the definition of competence profiles. Fuhr (1991) developed a number of competences based on

the main functions of an adult educator. He defined guidance, teaching, transfer of knowledge, and abilities and management as the main common tasks of adult educators. Out of those tasks, he defines the necessary competence profile for adult educators. Nittel (2000) mentioned that a competence profile for adult educators has to consider the following aspects:

- interaction with clients
- strategic acting in organisations
- handling with themselves
- transfer of contents.

These competence profiles identify tasks of adult educators and the competences that are necessary to fulfil these tasks. This is what Fuhr (1991) did, and through these competences he concluded what is necessary in the curricula for study programmes in adult education.

Competence profiles usually tend to list different competences without clarifying the interrelations between them. It seems as if professional acting results from the existence of all the competences. In real adult education situations, it can happen that adult educators who have all the necessary competences still do not act competently, whereas those who do not have the necessary competences might be able to act competently. Even though in adult education, competence-based approaches are criticised for this discursive gap, European policy focuses on the development of competence frameworks. That is why the discussion on competences increasingly finds its way into the curricula of study programmes.

The curricula of adult education programmes at German universities mostly include detailed lists of competences that students should acquire (cf. Lattke, 2012, p. 61). Compared to Italy, the curricular focus is mainly on topics of adult education or educational sciences, whereas curricula in Italy also include psychology, philosophy, and other topics (cf. Lattke, 2012, p. 61).

Although study programmes in Germany are more content-oriented, competences and the assessment of competences of adult educators are developed in several projects. These projects try to identify the competences that adult educators need. In a project on the development of a competence pass for adult educators, the project distinguished five different competence areas (Böhm, 2012):

- technical competence that includes knowledge in a specific field and on specific topics
- pedagogical-didactical competence that includes knowledge on how to use specific pedagogical methods and how to transfer knowledge to the learner

- personal/social/reflective competence that includes the ability to reflect critically on one's own actions as well as being able to act in social circumstances
- organisational and management competence
- guidance competence that is focused on situations in which the trainer has to guide or counsel a learner.

In adult education, there are no common job profiles. Adult educators work as programme planners, managers, teachers, and in many other capacities. At the same time, adult education lacks a common and precise competence profile (cf. Kollmannsberger & Fuchs, 2009, p. 49). The result of the missing profiles is that there is no transparent image of the competences an adult educator has; neither is there a set of competences they actually need to become a trainer. The universities do not have common competences in the curricula of their study programmes either; they are very heterogeneous in their structures (cf. Heyl, 2012, p. 49).

Teachers and trainers themselves, as well as managers in adult education, consider didactical and pedagogical competences an important aspect, as well as technical competences (cf. Kollmannsberger & Fuchs, 2009, pp. 51–52). The heterogeneous job profiles and job roles for adult educators create a situation that makes it complicated for universities to define a competence profile that will be promoted through the curriculum.

Requirements on Trainers' Competences in the German Labour Market

Since the establishment of a *Diplom* degree course with the focus on adult and continuing education in 1970, the question of professionalisation in the field of adult education has gone through a radical transformation (cf. Egetenmeyer & Schüssler, 2012, p. 5). Hence, due to the Bologna process in 1999, the field of adult education faced a lot of changes regarding the creation of new consecutive bachelor's and master's programmes. Although the new degree structure seemed to be the hardest challenge, adult education, and especially the process of professionalising adult education trainers, experienced new perspectives with regard to teaching theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The field of adult education at the academic level not only has to impart the skills and competences required but also to assure a qualified profession after graduation (cf. Sgier & Lattke, 2012, p. 35).

Adult education in Germany should be regarded as a serious professional field that cannot be taught part-time or casually but needs qualified full-time employees. That is why Tietgens (1998) emphasises the urgent need for

professionalisation as much as Giesecke does. He calls upon the adult education community to clarify the definition of professionalisation in order to train adult educators in the most efficient way (cf. Tietgens, 1998, pp. 28–36). As the importance of the key word *competence* is related to the requirements of professionalisation and quality assurance, one must first define the term *profession*. The term *profession* cannot be defined without including the term *professionalisation*. Adult education as a profession is a very young discipline, which went through a long process of professionalisation. This process of professionalisation includes the organisation of education in order to develop the area of adult and continuing education towards a profession. Unlike other areas as health or law, this process went through many challenges, as there was not enough awareness to see the importance of adult education as a profession. Nevertheless, the following requirements are important in order to understand the term: (1) a long, specialised apprenticeship in abstracted knowledge (expertise), (2) community-oriented work, and the (3) autonomy of control (professional ethics) (Lehmenkühler-Leuschner, 1993, p. 12). The problem here is that most adult educators do not have a specialised training such as doctors or lawyers do. Moreover, trainers frequently have a wide variety of apprenticeship backgrounds, so as a consequence, the varieties of educational traineeships cannot guarantee an explicit, qualified, and unitary definition of the term *profession*.

Referring to the Bologna process in 1999, the European Qualification Framework, which aims to provide more transparency and mobility in undergraduate and postgraduate studies, in their degree programmes and for their future work base as adult educators, implies specific competences of trainers in Europe (cf. Egetenmeyer & Schüssler, 2012, p. 5). In the field of adult and continuing education, the term *competence* can generally be defined as ‘a person’s ability to act’. These abilities include key qualifications such as personal, social, and methodological competences (‘knowing how to know’). Whereas the term *qualification* deals with the requirements of certain situations, the term *competence* is subject-oriented in this field and caught in a conflict between the right proportion of knowledge and skills (cf. Arnold, 2010, pp. 172–173).

The tasks of German adult educators include a variety of different groups, activity fields, and job titles. Many of the trainers in Germany used to work in *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres) as so-called *hauptberufliche pädagogische Mitarbeiter/innen* (HpM), which sometimes also included teaching tasks on a full-time job base. Then there are the *nebenberufliche pädagogische Mitarbeiter/innen*, who usually have a second job and train adults in vocational fields. Self-employed adult educators (*freiberufliche pädagogische Mitarbeiter/innen*)

represent another heterogeneous group in the area of continuing education. The problem with these heterogeneous groups is that there is no clear job title for the adult educators because of the diversity in status, employment situations, or motives at the workplace. Hence, German adult educators work under many occupational titles, including trainer, lecturer, course instructor, or counsellor (cf. Kraft, 2006, pp. 22–29). Regarding the tasks and activities of a trainer, there is no systematically collected empirical data in the field of continuing education. Most of the distinctions are made between areas such as teaching, management, or counselling. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has conducted a pilot study on the ‘Vocational and social situation of teachers in training’ in order to learn more about the lack of professionalisation, funding, and the different fields of adult education trainers.

In the sector of continuing education, it is unclear what kinds of competences are required and expected in this area of practice. Thomas Fuhr, a German professor in adult education, differentiates three specific competence levels: (1) teaching, (2) counselling, and (3) organising. Didactical competences include the ability to impart theoretical knowledge and practical skills through teaching methods related to the school system. Counselling competences deal with the motives and reasons of a person who seeks support for taking important decisions. The competence of organising adult education is pedagogical too, due to the fact that adult education centres are institutions which rely on contracts and inform about the expectations of the right performance of its trainers (cf. Fuhr, 1991, pp. 138–139).

There are many studies that discuss the required competences and skills, for example, the pilot study of Kraft (2006) or the European research programme called ‘Qualified to teach’ (QF2Teach). The research group who worked on the ‘competences in the field of adult and continuing education’ consisted of members from Denmark, Italy, Portugal, and France. The main aim of this project was to create a joint competence profile for learning facilitators in adult and continuing education. The research part through the so-called ‘Delphi study’ consisted of interviews with experts and an online survey in two waves (cf. Bernhardsson, 2012b). The questionnaire is available online in English, and the group consisted of 200 experts (ACE learning facilitators 52.2 per cent, managers 21 per cent, representatives 6.7 per cent, researchers 12.4 per cent, and policymakers 7.7 per cent from 8 different countries) (cf. Bernhardsson, 2012a).

As a result of the Delphi study, a catalogue was created with a total of nine core competences, according to the experts of teachers in the adults’ new formation. For every core competence, there is a brief description of items that include the relevant expertise:

1. *Management of groups and communication*: communicate clearly, manage group dynamics, and manage conflicts
2. *Expertise*: have expertise in their teaching area, apply the didactics in their teaching area
3. *Learning support*: support informal learning, promote the active role of the learner, have a wide repertoire of methods available that involve participants' life experience in the teaching activities
4. *Efficient teaching*: plan teaching activities (time, location, equipment, etc.)
5. *Personal professional development*: start from the needs of learners who use their own experience in the learning environment, understand their learning needs, help them set their own learning goals, be creative and flexible, reflect on their own professional role, be confident, be responsible for their own professional development, welcome criticism, see different perspectives
6. *Promote learning*: motivate and inspire
7. *Learning process analysis*: watch the learning process, evaluate learning outcomes
8. *Self-competence*: Be emotionally stable, open, authentic, and stress-resistant, analyse learning difficulties of learners
9. *Support for learners*: create a safe learning environment, empower learners to apply what they have learned (cf. Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2012, pp. 115ff., translated by the author).

Trainers, Curriculum, and Competences: The Portuguese Context

Trainers' activities have been regulated in Portugal for more than 21 years, and since 1999 there has been an initial vocational training key reference identifying the contents and competences related to trainers' activity. These activities, as well as the definition of trainers' contributions, have evolved a lot in the last decades. When the trainer activity was regulated for the first time in Portugal, it was defined in a classical and traditional way, in terms of their participation in the preparation, planning, development, and evaluation of training.

The Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), a certifying body, has designed and implemented the initial vocational training key reference, to be used in the trainers' initial vocational training (IEFP, 1999). The creation of this key reference made it possible for trainers to access a certificate of professional competence, ensuring the 'normalisation during the process of acquiring the necessary skills that are inherent to the trainer's profile, by stabilising the key contents, the intervention methodologies, and the minimum length required (for face-to-face training), as well as a suitable evaluation system' (IEFP, 1999, p. 4).

The trainers' initial vocational training included the following contents, during 90 hours, organised in three axes (IEFP, 1999, p. 8) (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Contents of the Initial Vocational Training (IEFP, 1999)

A. FRAMEWORK AXE	B. OPERATION AXE	EVALUATION AXE
A1. The trainer towards the training systems and context	B1. Educational objectives	C1. Session plan
A2. Learning factors and processes	B2. Learning evaluation	C2. Educational simulation
A3. Group communication and animation	B3. Educational resources	C3. Educational intervention proposal
A4. Educational methods and techniques	B4. Training planning	
	B5. Training follow-up and evaluation	

Regarding the axes of the training, the framework axe aimed to contextualise the area of training, to explore the different stages of the training cycle, and to allow for the identification of social and personal skills essential for the educational interaction. The operation axe aimed to create, through different units, proper conditions for the development of technical skills for the trainer's activity. The integration and mobilisation of the different skills developed in the course of the training were ensured in the application axe. By successfully attending this training, candidates would obtain a proficiency certificate as trainer (CAP).

In 2011, as part of the reform of the vocational training and the establishment of a legal framework of the National Qualifications System, a new system of trainers' training was established (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011, p. 2059) and the trainers' initial vocational training was revised and organised in four dimensions: (1) educational, (2) organisational, (3) practical, (4) deontological and ethical (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011). 'The deontological and ethical dimension is the one that introduces more new aspects, bearing in mind the previous organisation of trainers' training. This dimension pays special attention to the respect for the professional rules and values, as well as for gender equality and ethnic and cultural diversity.' (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011, p. 2960)

The reorganisation of the trainers' training system led to revising the initial vocational training key reference (IEFP, 1999). In 2012, a new key reference was edited (IESE, 2012), organised in the following training units (Table 2).

Table 2: *Contents of the Initial Vocational Training (IESE, 2012)*

MF1. Trainer: Systems, contexts, and profile
MF2. Initial educational simulation
MF3. Communication and dynamisation of training groups
MF4. Educational methodologies and strategies
MF5. Training operation: from plan to action
MF6. Teaching resources and multimedia
MF7. Collaborative and learning platforms
MF8. Training and learning evaluation
MF9. Final educational simulation

The revision of the key reference illustrates the growing importance of collaborative platforms and multimedia in the learning process. It is expected that the trainer should have a broader capacity than just for producing, giving, and evaluating contents in an efficient and effective way. This is what the key reference makes explicit: 'Nowadays the companies and the market expect more of the trainer: they demand an inspiring, motivating, and mobilising being, able to break stereotypes, pro-active, entrepreneurial, and creative.' (IESE, 2012, p. 5)

The Portuguese repertory for trainers' activities is strongly connected to the proposal of Buiskool et al. (2010). According to the Portuguese initial vocational training key reference (IESE, 2012, p. 6) trainers develop their activity in relation to: information and communication technology (ICT), entrepreneurship, pedagogical creativity, marketing, counselling, project management, team work, social and ethnic diversity, among others. Regarding the trainers' competences, they're related to: 'prepare and plan the learning process; facilitate the learning process orienting it towards the trainee; monitor and evaluate the learning outcomes; manage the lifelong learning dynamic; explore multimedia resources and collaborative platforms; manage the diversity (differentiated and inclusive pedagogy); and adopt entrepreneurship attitudes and creativity.' (IESE, 2012, p. 8)

As pointed out earlier, the trainers' curriculum has evolved a lot in the Portuguese context due to the evolution and continuous transformation of society, companies, politics, and learning challenges. In Portugal, the trainer at the end of the twentieth century was someone who possessed knowledge in a certain domain and should have the pedagogical ability to communicate and evaluate the learning outcomes. The first Portuguese trainers' initial vocational training key reference curriculum was oriented towards this aim. Over the years, the trainers' activity met new challenges—'trainer, nowadays, replies to multiple challenges and has to be prepared to face the needs of an increasingly competitive vocational training

market' (IESE, 2012, p. 5). The revision of the trainers' initial vocational training key reference curriculum demonstrates this progression.

Conclusion

The case studies show different levels of problems regarding the conditions of the job profile of trainers in adult education, the academic curriculum for preparing an adult educator, and the different situations of the labour market. On the other hand, the comparisons show us a similar condition regarding the perception of the adult educator as a professional in the education field. In this sense, some results are clear:

1. The job profile of an adult educator is quite different in the three countries. In Germany, the evolution of educational work in the adult learning field began in the 1970s; today we are facing further developed tasks and capabilities of adult educators. There is a labour market with widely diverse entering possibilities for people who studied adult education. Portugal also had a labour market situation within the system of recognition of prior learning before the financial crisis. This is happening, although a very precise path of professionalisation is present neither in Germany nor in Italy or Portugal. Italy is now defining the rules of the profession, but at the moment there are wide and large sectors where the adult educator/trainer can work without a specific professional level.
2. Competences and capabilities are the neuralgic points of professionalisation. The different levels of professionalism need different types of skills, as research has made clear, but in the real situation of the job there aren't many specifications. The practice is different from the theoretical model. It is necessary to build up a knowledge base more and more linked with the practical situation.
3. University curricula are similar in Italy and Germany, whereas in Portugal more attention and emphasis is on the vocational education and training system. A very interesting similar situation happens in some Italian and German universities in a European project for the development of a transnational curriculum in several European universities. The project (ESRALE Project, European Studies and Research in Adult Learning and Education; Project Number: 540117-LLP-1-2013-1-DE-ERASMUS-EQMC) intends to develop an adult education curriculum featuring the same contents and same ECTS for each course. In Italy and Germany, a project for developing a similar core curriculum in the European Master in Adult Education² has been underway for ten years.

2 See ESRALE Project: ESRALE – European Studies and Research in Adult Learning and Education Project Number: 540117-LLP-1-2013-1-DE-ERASMUS. The Project

4. The labour markets are different in Italy, Germany, and Portugal, and the perspectives of the adult educator change in these countries. However, it is possible to name the problem of cultural consideration and an adult educator's economic profile as depending on the laws of each country. In Portugal, legislative changes have put the job profile of an adult educator in a different light, with more secure definitions.

It is very important to compare curricula³, competences, and degree levels between European countries because jobs in the social and educational fields are very important for democracy. Lifelong learning is impossible without adult educators, and a project manager in social and educational sectors must have the clear competences for building new and free societies. Therefore, studies in adult education and learning are at the base of the well-being of every democratic country in Europe and the world.

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is working on the definition of core competences for degree programmes in adult education and learning at the master's level. The network of ten European universities looks at the possibilities of having joint titles and joint curricula. Cf. www.esraleproject.org (04/2015).

- 3 For other informations about current structures in adult education study programmes, see also the contribution of Semrau, Vieira and Guida in this book.

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Regulations and working conditions for trainers in adult education: A comparative glance*

Abstract

Adult education is a fundamental and strategic part of the new strategies for Europe. Education, learning, lifelong and lifewide learning are the central pivots for a sustainable, smart, and creative growth of people for the future, a very close future, as a mid-term horizon. Thus, the training of the trainers appears to be one of the most important points of research and practice fields in adult education, and it is possible to say that the beginning and continuous training of adult educators, adult teachers, trainers, guides, and coaches/mentors is a sensitive and central point for professionalisation. This chapter focuses on the qualitative pathways for the training of adult trainers from a comparative perspective. The authors describe the differences at the legislative level and the variations in the training situation in three European countries: Italy, Germany, and Portugal. The aim of the article is to confirm the initial hypothesis: Although trainers are highly regarded in the development of societies, economies, and people, their working conditions and job situations seem to be underestimated (reflected namely in unstable labour contracts, long working hours, and a precarious payment system).

Introduction

Adult learning and education are vast fields of research, important for both the current and future conditions of people in Europe and the world. In this context, the European Commission is looking to better the conditions for citizens by implementing policies to improve the conditions of adults. We know that more adult education can help Europe overcome the economic crisis, because learning is essential for increasing social inclusion and for growing competences and capabilities at the workplace and in the labour market (cf. Federighi, 2013). The different levels of participation in education and training by adults aged 25 to 64 reflect the different levels of participation in the labour market (cf. Federighi,

* The article represents the work of all authors, although Introduction, Conclusion and Part 1 are by Vanna Boffo, Part 2 is by Kathrin Kaleja, Part 3 is by Joana Fernandes

2013). There is a correlation between the development of economic growth in some countries over the years 2000, 2005, and 2010 and the better performances of these countries. This is because the new, young generation have invested a lot more in up-skilling than their predecessors. Where this has been the case, there have been significant results in terms of economic growth and improved social conditions (cf. Federighi, 2013, pp. 26–27).

Learning and education are important for the training of adults (cf. Knowles, 1984; Morin, 1999). In this context, problems regarding the training of the trainers are at the centre of our knowledge about adult learning and education.

Who are the trainers in the field of adult education? We have different answers depending on the countries of Europe where we ask this question to scholars or policy makers. We can see the answer depends on national legislation and on the qualitative pathway regarding the training of the trainers.

We will observe the situation in three European countries: Italy, Germany, and Portugal. Comparing these three states will lead to the conclusion that the political level is very important for improving the working situation of trainers in adult education. You could say where the legal provisions regarding the profile of trainers are clear, there are better job conditions and better circumstances for the diffusion of the 'system' of adult education.

The Condition of Italian Trainers

In Italy, the condition of trainers in the field of adult education varies depending on whether you look at the public or the private sector. From a historical point of view, in Italy, it is possible to talk about an adult education path, and directly about the figure of the adult educator, beginning in 1997. In March that year, there was a public law reforming public administration and consequently the possibilities of learning paths for adults into higher education institutions. In this sense, the legislation defined the difference between a specific professional profile in the private sector and the profile of a teacher at school.

The profile of an adult educator emerged in Italy after World War II, when the literacy of the Italian people was of high relevance. In a very important period for the re-building of Italy, education and learning were at the centre of this process of reconstruction. The adult educator in 1947, (Law n. 1559, 17/12/1947: the date when the school for adults was established) was an important person in the informal context of education: in associations, in religious situations, and in schools for adults. An important point for the qualification of the adult educator profile occurred when the Italian Ministry of Education (Ministerial Order n° 455 on

29 July 1997) decided to establish the Permanent Territorial Centres for Adult Learning and Training (CTP).

The CTP were replaced in 2012, and now we have the CPIA (Provincial Centres for Adult Learning – DPR 29/10/2012 n. 263) where it is possible for an adult to obtain the certification for primary and secondary school, as well as the certification for proficiency in Italian. This type of path is public, and it is the better way to reach a certification valid in the Italian labour market. In this case, the profile of an adult educator is the same as that of a teacher (7 EQF). Furthermore, the role can be compared to a teacher in a public Italian primary or secondary school. This is the sector of formal education.

Then there is the private sector of adult education and learning. Here, there is law n. 92/2012, in which the Italian government defines the general rules for the recognition and validation of an adult's prior learning. Ever since, that legislation has been applied via legislative decree 13/2013, making it possible to recognize the competences of each adult, thereby giving all adults the possibility to study or to learn.

Who is the adult trainer in Italy, currently? You can distinguish between those professionals active in the training of employed workers—mainly within the framework of business policy—and those training unemployed workers.

Regarding the training of employed workers, it is important to distinguish between adult learning professionals working in professionalisation pathways and those working for various kinds of organisations represented in the training market (global training companies, various kinds of public, private, and combined training agencies with different missions and structures—religious organisations, trade unions, etc.). In the case of unemployed workers, you find professionals working for organisations represented in the training market driven by social policy. The field of training for employed workers includes roles such as in-company training managers, human resource managers, experts, consultants, and trainers.

In non-formal adult education, specialised sector-oriented experts work in the various areas of the field. In some cases, certificates or specific qualifications are required to exercise a profession, for instance, tourist guides and health educators. Managerial roles are also examined in the various fields under consideration: school heads in adult education, company directors in private organisations, or heads of in-company training. Support services include professionals with the following roles: guidance practitioners and counsellors employed at public employment centres but also at companies (in this case they are often combined with other complementary profiles such as selection consultants) (cf. Boffo, 2010).

The Diversity of Qualification Pathways for Adult and Continuing Education Trainers in Germany

The Continuing Education Acts (*Weiterbildungsgesetze*) are the only main legal basis for regulating the field of adult and continuing education in Germany. Each of Germany's 16 states has its own act on continuing education. The different acts lead to different situations in each of the states. Some of the acts define the qualification that trainers need for their work; some don't refer to staff in adult and continuing education. Those that do mention requirements for the qualification of trainers—like the Bavarian Continuing Education Act—state that trainers should have a suitable qualification (Bayerische Staatsregierung, 1974). Most employees in adult and continuing education obtained an academic degree (73 per cent). Another 26 per cent acquired a degree in vocational education and training. A lot of people who work in adult and continuing education are career changers (cf. Kraft, Seitter, & Kollwe, 2009, p. 18). 38 per cent of the people working in adult and continuing education have an academic degree in educational fields. 49 per cent obtained teaching skills through continuing education. 34 per cent of the people working in adult and continuing education do not have any teaching qualification (cf. WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, 2005, p. 49). In adult and continuing education, there is wide-ranging diversity in initial and continuing qualification programmes. A mandatory qualification path does not exist in the field. The qualification paths of adult educators are diverse, and specific regulations and minimum standards do not exist (cf. Kraft, Seitter & Kollwe, 2009, p. 19).

The statistics make it obvious that trainers obtain their qualifications as trainers through various paths: through a university degree (e.g. in education or secondary/vocational teacher education), through continuing education programmes with an educational emphasis, or through a programme without any pedagogical qualification. The different qualification paths are strongly diversified, and standards are not defined. In addition to the formal paths, there are projects on the validation of adult educators' competences, such as the GRETA Project, which aims to identify the basic elements for developing a validation process for the competences of trainers in adult and continuing education.

An academic qualification in an educational field can be obtained by earning a teaching degree for secondary or vocational school or a bachelor's or master's degree in education. Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in education feature various concentrations, including adult and continuing education, lifelong learning, and many others. The structure of bachelor's and master's degrees with an emphasis on adult and continuing education varies from one German university

to the next (cf. Heyl, 2012, p. 49). For the qualification programmes in continuing education, a similar situation can be assumed, because programmes are provided by different providers.

In Germany, adult and continuing education is defined as education for people who completed formal education. It is not part of Germany's formal education system. Adult and continuing education is divided into vocational education and training and general adult and continuing education. The field of adult and continuing education is diversified, featuring providers of different sizes and with different offers. A study financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) shows that in 2004 in adult and continuing education, 16,841 providers of adult and continuing education were identified by the *Weiterbildungskataster* (Dietrich, Schade, & Behrendorf, 2008). 1.6 million people were employed in the adult education sector (including self-employed people and volunteers) (cf. WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, 2005, p. 3). 1.3 million of them work as trainers in adult and continuing education. The field of adult and continuing education is a broad field with a lot of employees. In adult and continuing education, 83 per cent of the people work as trainers in teaching situations.

Of those working in adult and continuing education, 14 per cent are employed, 74 per cent are self-employed, 10 per cent are volunteers, and 3 per cent work under other working conditions. Self-employed trainers in adult and continuing education face particularly difficult working conditions, because their salary per hour is much lower than that of employed trainers. In addition, they may face irregular working hours, and being paid per hour may mean financial insecurity. This is relevant for most of the trainers in adult and continuing education. Due to this situation, trainers in adult and continuing education need to work in more than one institution, or they need a second job. 62 per cent of the people working in adult and continuing education work part time in the sector, with a main job outside the adult and continuing education sector. They are students, retirees, or homemakers (cf. WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, 2005, p. 5). Trainers tend to work for more than one institution as well. If they work in more than one institution, they work in an average of 2.9 other institutions (cf. WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, 2005, p. 61). This underlines the situation that more than half of the trainers working in adult and continuing education do have a main job next to their work as a trainer. There are very few trainers for whom adult and continuing education is the only source of income. The high rate of self-employment shows that adult and continuing education as a main job does not provide a secure financial basis. The number of work contracts can have an impact on the number of working hours per week and on work pressure. If trainers work in more than

one institution, they have to travel back and forth between the different providers of adult and continuing education.

Although the results show that the working conditions of trainers in adult and continuing education in Germany are precarious, some 80 per cent of the trainers state that they are satisfied with their working conditions (cf. WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, 2005, p. 9). The high satisfaction rate is hard to reconcile with the working conditions. Probably their satisfaction results from the fact that they have chosen to do their training work as a side job.

Legislation in Portugal and the Continuous Changes in Trainers' Working Conditions

Trainers' professional activities were first regulated in Portugal in 1994 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1994). On this date, the trainer was defined as a 'professional who while training, establishes a pedagogical relationship with trainees, favouring the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as the development of attitudes and forms of behaviour suitable to a professional performance' (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1994, p. 6885).

Although this regulation occurred in 1994, it was a set of actions of the previous decade that paved the way for the need to regulate the trainer's activity. In 1991, there was a distinction between professional training in the education system and professional training in the labour market; there also was a distinction between initial vocational training and continuing vocational training (Decree-Law n.º 401/91, 16 October 1991); and it was expected that the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) would create a pool of trainers (Decree-Law n.º 405/91, 16 October 1991). In 1992, the legal framework of professional certification was established (cf. Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1992, p. 2468).

The proficiency certificate as trainer, named 'Proficiency Certificate as Trainer' (CAP), was valid for five years and could be renewed by professional development (at least 120 hours of training per year) and taking continuing vocational training courses (minimum 30 hours) (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1994). In 1997, the type-approval conditions and the contents of the trainers' initial vocational training were defined, and the renewable conditions of the trainer's certificates of professional competence were identified (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1997).

The IEFP is the Portuguese public organisation responsible for issuing trainer certificates. As a certifying body, it designed and implemented the initial vocational training key reference to be used in the trainers' initial vocational training

(cf. IEFEP, 1999). The creation of this key reference made it possible for trainers to access a certificate of professional competence, ensuring the 'normalisation during the process of acquiring the necessary skills that are inherent to the trainer's profile, by stabilising the key contents, the intervention methodologies and the minimum length required (for face-to-face training), as well as a suitable evaluation system' (IEFP, 1999, p. 4).

Since 2010, the renewal of the proficiency certificate as trainer has no longer been mandatory (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2010). The reasons for this change include the 'constraints regarding vocational training' (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2010, p. 4330) and the absence of a legal framework of vocational training (resulting from the Ministers Council Resolution n. ° 173/2007, 7 November 2007). This change was adopted in a non-consensual way by the different players of training, because some are concerned that if trainers don't have to validate their certificate, they may not invest in training and updating.

In the following year, as part of the reform of vocational training and the establishment of a legal framework of the National Qualifications System (Decree-Law n.° 396/2007, 31 December 2007), a new system of trainer's training and certification of educational competencies was established in Portugal (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011, p. 2059). The changes made by this new system are multiple. First, the designation of the trainer's certification changed from 'Proficiency Certificate as Trainer' to 'Teaching Skills Certificate'. Furthermore, new ways to access the trainer's certification were introduced. As of 2011, earning a 'Teaching Skills Certificate' is possible by: attending initial vocational training; the recognition, validation, and certification of trainers' competencies acquired by work experience; and the recognition of educational qualifications.

Since 2011, certification processing has been done by an electronic site¹, the 'Information System of Trainers' Training and Certification', replacing the previous delivery of paper documents to the IEFEP. Besides issuing the 'Teaching Skills Certificate', this platform contains vocational training courses and the list of recognised educational qualifications, amongst others. This platform is also a trainers' pool. According to data from the platform, over 300,000 trainers with a Teaching Skills Certificate are registered here.

Although the trainer in adult education is frequently referred to in a broad way, as someone capable of integrating multiple actions and training formats, it

1 <http://netforce.iefep.pt>.

is undeniable that the trainer's activity depends on the type and form of training. The trainer may develop vocational training within a company (for active employees); vocational training within a training centre (for active employees and/or unemployed persons); double certification training (educational and professional) for young people and adults; parental education/training; trainers' training; processes of recognition, validation, and certification of competencies, amongst many other possibilities. In essence, each training has distinctive purposes, objectives, durations, and methodologies, which also require specific skills and specific ways of behaviour from the trainer, and he/she must have a strong and fast capacity to adapt (cf. Fernandes & Santos, 2014, p. 47; cf. Santos & Fernandes, 2014, p. 51). Therefore, considering, on one hand, the importance of the trainer's activity, but also the demands related to it, it is relevant to pay attention to their activity, because, if the trainer's activity has been analysed according to its educational capacity and respective efficiency, it has not been as well analysed regarding the conditions in which this activity is developed (cf. Delgoulet, Cau-Bareille, Chatigny, Gaudart, Santos, & Vidal-Gomel, 2012, p. 111). Despite the important acknowledgment of the trainers' activity, their activity is demanding also because they usually develop it under precarious work conditions, with unstable contracts of unpredictable duration, and with a very variable salary level (cf. Conselho Nacional de Educação, 2011, p. 248; Fernandes & Santos, 2014, p. 47; Santos & Ferreira, 2012, p. 51), reflecting a lack of appreciation for training as a professional activity. In fact, as Abrantes (2011, p. 248) pointed out, the cohesion and stability of the trainers' team are crucial for the training development. However, these aspects don't seem to be considered in the Portuguese scenario, especially as far as stability is concerned (cf. Santos & Ferreira, 2012).

In Portugal, over the last three decades, there has been an effort to regulate training, including the trainer's activity. In Portugal, the trainer's qualification is, in most situations, guaranteed by the attendance of an initial vocational training programme. The analysis of training and adult trainers reveals a strong dependence (as far as training is concerned) on external funding sources and a strong sensitivity towards the priority given in the political agenda. So training in Portugal follows a relative ambivalence: on the one hand, training is associated with great responsibility and expectations regarding the development of society; on the other hand, it has to deal with significant instability and unpredictability and also a relative lack of appreciation. The trainer is expected to know how to deal with these two dimensions throughout his/her career.

Conclusion

The three dimensions of the profile of the adult educator or adult trainer show us some differences and some similarities, focused on a political problem in Italy and on cultural problems in Germany and in Portugal.

At the base of the diffusion of the importance of adult training is the power of education and the possibility to improve democracy, employability, and the economic and social development in countries and regions where the level of participation in education and training is high (European Commission, 2010; European Commission, 2011). In this sense, more education and, in particular, more adult education will be the pathway towards the future from a political point of view (cf. Federighi, 2013). In Germany and in Portugal, these types of sentences are in line with national strategy. The challenge of the countries' growth is strictly linked to adult education and depends on the profile of the professionals working in this sector. In Italy, the situation is different in terms of government policy choices.

From the legislative point of view, the role of the adult educator is important all three countries; likewise, the training of adult educators takes place at the higher education level, above all in Italy and in Germany. In spite of the recognition of trainers' competences in Portugal, and regardless of the university pathways in Germany and in Italy, there is still a lack of appreciation for the adult education professional: employers ask for a high degree of flexibility, salary expectations are not that good, and sometimes trainers have to work in two or more workplaces at the same time.

More work is necessary to raise public appreciation of the adult educator, because their role is essential in helping societies meet the challenges of tomorrow.

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Academic professionalisation in adult education: insights into study programmes in Germany, Italy and Portugal

Abstract

The three EU member states Germany, Italy, and Portugal have implemented measures of the Bologna process as a common strategy, wherefrom different situations concerning the organisation of study programmes related to adult education have developed in these three different country-specific contexts. This paper takes a closer look at the opportunities for academic professionalisation provided by university studies in adult education at the bachelor's and master's level in each country. From a structural point of view, a comparative analysis will show differences in the amount of contents related to adult education at the bachelor's level compared to the master's level. Furthermore, it will be considered which possibilities for and types of personal development exist in these degree courses.

Introduction

The field of adult education is very wide and diverse. Adult educators as a group are heterogeneous, and the circumstances under which they perform their daily work vary depending on the sector they work in. This means that the specific characteristics of adult education and of the professionalisation process in that field can only be understood with regard to the social structures of a region or country, their historical development, and their political and economic surroundings (cf. Jütte & Lattke, 2014, p. 7; Nuissl, 2005, p. 48). Considering the concrete issue of academic professionalisation of adult educators from an internationally comparative point of view, this must also be taken into account (cf. Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2014b, p. 92).

Furthermore, a huge variety and complexity within the practical situations adult educators are confronted with can be seen. These characteristics make it impossible in the daily pedagogical practice to closely follow behavioural guidelines. There are no universal solutions for educational practice. Rather, it is characteristic that there are contradictions and antinomies which must be endured. Consequently, it is necessary for adult educators to interpret situations based on their scientific knowledge so that they are able to act adequately in these situations: 'In other words, professionals are able to put on professional glasses through which they can see situations clearly

from the perspective of adult education.’ (Egetenmeyer & Käpplinger, 2011, p. 25). Professionalism in this sense means to understand and interpret daily situations and to act adequately on the basis of professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes (*ibid.*; Egetenmeyer & Schüsler, 2014a, pp. 30 ff.; Alberici & Orefice, 2006, pp. 23 ff.). Therefore, academic professionalisation in terms of academic qualification as a basis for developing professionalism is related, on the one hand, to more abstract, scientific knowledge imparted through a formal qualification, but on the other hand also to possibilities for developing personal competencies during this formal education.

This paper takes a closer look at existing opportunities for academic qualification in adult education at the bachelor’s and master’s level in Germany, Italy, and Portugal. The starting point for the discussion will be the contextual commonality of the Bologna Process in each of these three EU member states. A comparative analysis seeks to identify current similarities and differences in organised study programmes in the country-specific contexts. Furthermore, it will be considered which possibilities for and different types of personal development exist in these degree courses.

Opportunities for Academic Professionalisation in Adult Education in Germany

With the implementation of the Bologna Process in Germany, the academic qualification for adult educators has changed from the former one-cycle diploma programmes (duration: 4.5 years) to the current two-cycle bachelor’s and master’s degree courses (duration: 3 plus 2 years) (*cf.* Egetenmeyer & Schüsler, 2014b, p. 93). The ways in which curricular contents were transferred from the diploma system to the new study model vary, and the change was not always an easy one (*cf.* Faulstich, Graeßner, & Walber, 2012, p. 30; Lattke, 2012, p. 53). According to statistical information from the German Rectors Conference (HRK), the vast majority of all study courses in the 2014–2015 winter term were transferred to bachelor’s and master’s courses (*cf.* HRK, 2014, p. 7). The research that was done for the following comparison showed a similar situation, with only one programme related to adult education finishing with a diploma degree could be identified¹. However, researching the online study information pages does not clearly reveal how many German study

1 The contents related to the German study programmes are based on the named sources and on own research, which was done using online university information pages in February 2015. These sources include the study guide of the German Institute of Adult Education (DIE) <http://www.die-bonn.de/weiterbildung/studienfuehrer/default.aspx> and the subject information system of the HRK <http://www.hochschulkompass.de/studium/studieren-in-deutschland-die-fachsuche.html>. When searching the second

courses at the bachelor's and master's level are connected to contents related to adult education, because the number of courses listed varied between 55 (DIE) and 28 (HRK) bachelor's courses and 74 (DIE) and 27 (HRK) master's courses.

Undergraduate programmes providing knowledge related to adult education in Germany are mainly named 'educational sciences' or 'pedagogy'; only few course titles include terms like adult education, lifelong learning, or extracurricular education (cf. Faulstich, Graeßner, & Walber, 2012, p. 32; Frößinger, 2010, p. 3). Within this range of labels for academic programmes, also diverse structures can be found in which adult education contents are organised. There are single-subject bachelor's courses in educational sciences or pedagogy in which students can concentrate in adult education (e.g. the courses offered at the universities in Chemnitz, Tübingen, and Bamberg) as well as programmes in general educational subjects without the possibility to concentrate even though adult education contents are included in the general curriculum (e.g. the bachelor's programme in pedagogy/educational sciences at Ludwig Maximilian University Munich). Furthermore, there are double-major bachelor's programmes combining education with one other subject in which the amount of credit points related to education, and consequently to adult education, varies from one university to the next (programmes like these can be studied for instance at Humboldt University in Berlin or at the universities in Würzburg and Potsdam). But the amount of credit points in the single-major bachelor's courses with a concentration in adult education varies, too (cf. Heyl, 2012, p. 46). Faulstich, Graeßner, and Walber notice that the adult education-related contents in the bachelor's courses they studied was around 20 per cent (cf. Faulstich, Graeßner, & Walber, 2012, p. 32). Considering the bachelor's degree as a first academic qualification that should qualify graduates to work professionally in the labour market, and given the diversity of educational pathways at this first degree level in Germany, it is doubtful whether these studies offer the basic scientific knowledge and competences for professionalised work in adult education.

In contrast to the undergraduate programmes, the adult education-related master's courses offered in Germany have a variety of labels and provide many possibilities for specialisation (cf. Faulstich, Graeßner, & Walber, 2012, pp. 32–33). For example, there are programmes called 'research in continuing education and organisational development' (Dresden) or 'educational sciences with a main focus on heterogeneity in education' (Augsburg), in which adult education knowledge can be deepened. Some master's courses with a more general title give students the opportunity to choose a concentration in adult education (e.g. in the master's programmes offered

source the keywords *Erwachsenenbildung* (adult education) and *Weiterbildung* (continuing education) were used to identify related programmes.

in Tübingen, named ‘research and development in education,’ or Bamberg, named ‘educational sciences’). In some other master’s programmes, students cannot specialise in adult education even though adult education contents are taught in separate modules (e.g. the master’s programme in Chemnitz). In the master’s courses studied by Faulstich, Graeßner, and Walber, around 48 per cent of the content is related to adult education (cf. Faulstich, Graeßner, & Walber, 2012, p. 32). Consequently, it can be said that for the second-degree cycle in Germany, adult education topics are more visible, but very often they are also more specific (ibid, p. 37).

Overall, it appears from a structural point of view that adult education loses its relevance in the general educational programmes at the bachelor’s level, whereas at the master’s level, this can partly be compensated by study courses preparing students for special occupations in adult education. Although a recommendation for the structure of educational study programmes with a concentration in adult education, published by the German Educational Research Association (DGfE) in 2008, exists in Germany, neither bachelor’s nor master’s courses are currently organised on a common basis (cf. Heyl, 2012, pp. 48 ff.)². This leads to diversification and a lack of transparency in academic offerings (cf. Frößinger, 2010, p. 4).

Opportunities for Academic Professionalisation in Adult Education in Italy

The Bologna reform and the following legislative measures in the process of implementation in Italy had profound effects on the organisation and functional structures of the university system in general as well as on the debate within the academic community regarding the effects and range of the occurring changes (cf. Stefani, 2009). Starting from the 1999 university reform, a university network in adult education was established with the aim of rethinking and restructuring the study curriculum for the education of professionals in adult education in Italy. Within a few years, adult education gained visibility and was built on a comprehensive scientific base, which can be shown by the growth of professorships as well as the variety of study courses developed with the intention to create professional profiles in different areas of adult education (cf. Alberici & Orefice, 2006, pp. 99–100).

Nowadays, Italian higher education institutions offer various bachelor’s and master’s courses in adult education. They are generally defined as ‘sciences of education and training’. The following four selected examples provide an exemplary impression of the present study organisation at Italian universities:

2 For more detailed information about the curriculum for study programmes in adult education see the contribution of Boffo, Kaleja, Sharif-Ali and Fernandes in this volume.

University 'Roma Tre' in Rome:

- B.A. in Training and Human Resource Development (3-year course) including seminars in docimology³ and evaluation of lifelong learning, 9 ECTS; adult education, 9 ECTS; technologies for adult education, 9 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Roma Tre: Corso di laurea triennale in formazione e sviluppo delle risorse umane 2014/2015)
- M.A. in Adult and Continuing Education (2-year course) including seminars in lifelong learning and adult education, 12 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Roma Tre: Corso di laurea magistrale in educazione degli adulti e formazione continua 2013/2014)

University of Padua:

- B.A. in Educational Sciences and Training (3-year course) including a seminar in adult and continuing education, 6 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Padova: Curriculum formazione e sviluppo delle risorse umane 2014/2015)
- M.A. in Continuing Education (2-year course) including seminars in adult education, 9 ECTS; ethics of continuing education, 6 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Padova, offerta formativa 2013/2014)

University of Firenze, Florence:

- B.A. in Social Education (3-year course) includes a seminar in social and adult education, 6 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Firenze: Offerta formative, corsi di laurea dell'Ateneo fiorentino, pedagogia sociale ed educazione degli adulti)
- M.A. in Adult Education, Continuing Education and Pedagogical Sciences (2-year course) including seminars in the foundations of adult and continuing education, 12 ECTS. (Università degli studi di Firenze: Fondamenti dell'educazione degli adulti e della formazione continua)

Catholic University of the Sacred Heart:

- B.A. in Sciences of Education and Training (3-year course, situated in the area of the city of Brescia) includes pedagogy of the workplace and training, 10 ECTS. (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart: Offerta formative, corso di laurea triennale in scienze dell'educazione e della formazione, piano degli studi)

3 These seminars focus on the historical benchmarks and theoretical framework for testing and assessment techniques (docimology) and evaluation research, with particular reference to adult competencies (Università degli studi di Roma Tre: Docimologia e valutazione dell'apprendimento permanente base).

- M.A. in Pedagogical Design and Training of Human Resources (2-year course, situated in the area of the city of Brescia) includes a seminar in the pedagogy of organisation and human resource development, 10 ECTS. (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart: Offerta formative, corso di laurea magistrale in progettazione pedagogica e formazione delle risorse umane, piano degli studi)

One example of academic studies in adult education in Italy is the master's degree programme at the University of Padua, which is designed to pursue various goals such as preparing specialists of continuing education and training programmes in the fields of continuing vocational training, adult education, learning, and upgrading human resources. Today, beginning in the 2014–2015 academic year, this MA course in 'continuing education' has become an interclass degree titled 'management of education and training'. It is characterised by the combination of two master's degrees: 'planning and management of education' and 'science of adult and continuing education'. The main attribute of this course is the opportunity for students to link theory with practice in various manners. In fact, the learners can do the *stage*, or internships, in some official organisation to enrich their knowledge and competencies. Also the students can complete their master's thesis during their *stage* or internship in the organisational context (Università degli studi di Padova, offerta formativa 2013/2014).

Opportunities for Academic Professionalisation in Adult Education in Portugal

The field of academic professionalisation in adult and continuing education does not have a long history at Portuguese universities. Over the period of the Bologna process (launched in 1999), the lifetime of the EU Lifelong Learning programme (2007–2013), and the participation of the state in the development of European and international lifelong learning strategies, academic interest in research on the education of adults has increased, opening new horizons for learning experiences towards graduate trainings specifically directed to adult pedagogy (cf. European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011; Lima & Guimarães, 2011). Nowadays, both public and private universities support academic trainings in this domain at the levels of *licenciatura*⁴ (similar to bachelor's, B.A.), master's, and PhD degree studies that propose diverse designations of the courses. The analysis of available online

4 The Portuguese *licenciatura* consists of a three- or four-year course that students can attend after completing secondary education. It can be compared to bachelor's (B.A.) degree studies provided by some European universities.

study plans and programmes at the public universities illustrates the example of the common policy identified in the field. The Portuguese *licenciatura* (3-year course), which provides specialisations under the frameworks of community intervention, social education, and education or educational sciences, offers seminars (obligatory or optional) about professionalisation in adult and continuing education. These seminars have a workload of 5 to 10 ECTS⁵ (see Table 1, based on the official sites of the Portuguese universities, spring-summer, 2015).

Table 1: Some examples of Licenciatura at Portuguese public universities that offer seminars in adult education (based on the official sites of the Portuguese universities, spring-summer, 2015)

University	Licenciatura
University of Lisbon, Institute of Education	Specialisation in education and training (3-year course), seminar in policy and practice of adult education and training, 5 ECTS. Specialisation in educational sciences (3-year course), seminar in adult training, 4.5 ECTS.
University of Algarve, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences	Specialisation in educational sciences (3-year course), seminars in adult education and training, 5 ECTS, and lifelong learning, 5 ECTS.
University of Coimbra, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	Specialisation in educational sciences (3-year course), seminar in adult education and training, 6 ECTS.
University of Porto, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	Specialisation in educational sciences (3-year course), seminar in psychosociology in adult education, 6 ECTS.
University of Minho, Institute of Education	Specialisation in education (3-year course), optional seminar in adult pedagogy, 5 ECTS; projects and seminars in adult education and community intervention, 10 ECTS + 10 ECTS next semester.
University of Madeira, Centre of Social Sciences	Specialisation in educational sciences, optional seminar in adult education, 7.5 ECTS.

5 ECTS is short for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, which includes a standard grading scale to make higher education comparable in Europe (cf. European Commission, 2015).

The specialisations exclusively dedicated to adult education with large workloads are mainly concentrated at the MA and PhD level (see Table 2). These courses focus on national and international theory-practice reflection on continuing and adult education policy.

Table 2: Some examples of MA and PhD courses with a specialisation in adult education at Portuguese public universities (based on the official sites of the Portuguese universities, spring-summer, 2015)

University	MA/PhD graduate courses
University of Lisbon, Institute of Education	MA in educational sciences, specialisation in adult training, 120 ECTS. MA in education, specialisation in adult training, 120 ECTS. PhD in education, specialisation in adult training, 180 ECTS.
NOVA University of Lisbon, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and Faculty of Sciences and Technology	PhD in educational sciences, specialisation in adult education and training, 180 ECTS.
University of Coimbra, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	MA in the education and training of adults and community intervention, 120 ECTS. PhD in educational sciences, specialisation in continuing and adult education, 180 ECTS.
University of Porto, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	MA in adult education and training, 120 ECTS.
University of Minho, Institute of Education	MA in educational sciences, specialisation in adult education, 120 ECTS. MA in education, specialisation in adult education and community intervention, 120 ECTS.
University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro	MA in educational sciences, specialisation in adult education, 120 ECTS.

Different types of curricular trainings and internships are implemented in Portugal, mostly as part of MA and PhD programmes. They monitor the operationalisation and accomplishment of some educational projects and present quantitative and qualitative data to academic and executive communities. The results (probation reports, final course dissertations, and academic works) reflect the national framework related, for instance, to the implementation of the Programme for Development and Expansion of Adult Education and Training Knowing+ (1999–2006), the New Opportunities Initiative, the activities of the Competencies

Recognition, Validation, and Certification Centres, and the like (cf. Rothes, 2003; Lima & Guimarães, 2004). The recent actions determined by the CONVINTEA VI process (2009) and the implementation of the European Agenda of Lifelong Learning (2012–2014) promote comparative academic research and studies on the subject (cf. Pereira, 2012; Aguiar & Silva, 2013). However, diversified choices and complex alternatives in the academic context of professionalisation in adult education determine the attention that Portuguese stakeholders devote to reviewing the long-term strategies, constitution and sustainability of this scientific domain for providing a comprehensive sense of the profession, calling for cooperative work at the international level, and support employment opportunities and career development in the sector.

Comparison

The juxtaposition of study programmes in Germany, Italy, and Portugal illustrates the current status of the Bologna process in the different national higher education systems. Whereas the changes in Germany were more focused on structural changes due to the prior existence of diploma programmes in adult education, the focus in Portugal and Italy changed towards raising the visibility of adult education as an academic discipline. Besides this, the Bologna Process as such marks a milestone in terms of being a common framework from which different situations have evolved in the process of academic professionalisation in adult education in each of the three countries examined.

Furthermore, the current situation in academic studies related to adult education in Germany and Portugal seems to be characterised, on the one hand, by a more general, interdisciplinary, and broad education at the bachelor's level, while, on the other hand, study programmes at the master's level are more specific and focused on specialisations in scientific research or special fields of adult education. The research performed for this article shows for selected study courses at the bachelor's and master's levels that the amount of ECTS related to adult education contents is lower for bachelor's courses than it is for master's courses. The situation in Italy regarding this issue cannot be clearly determined. Based on the examples given for study courses in Germany and Portugal, as well as the Bologna Process discourse that considers the bachelor's degree as the first degree that should enable graduates to work as professionals (cf. Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Framework, 2005, pp. 66–67), it is doubtful at least for Germany and Portugal whether graduates are sufficiently prepared for professional work in adult education after completing the first cycle of studies.

Regarding the aforementioned typical contradictions and antinomies that must be endured by adult educators in complex and changing practical situations, it was also important when doing the international comparison to find out whether possibilities for the personal development of competencies to act adequately in these situations are provided as part of students' academic studies in adult education. Therefore, it seems to be important to mention the opportunities to do internships or a *stage*, which is a special form of a voluntary internship during master's studies in Italy. Furthermore, also collaborations between universities and companies are implemented, including the *Parimun Project* in Italy, which offers the possibility for students to write their thesis or do research in an organisation working in the field of adult education in the Venetian region (La Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università di Padova). In Germany, possibilities for connecting theoretical studies with practical experiences while pursuing a degree in adult education are offered, too, for instance, via internships that are part of the curriculum or via individual projects organised by the chairs of adult education at the universities (cf. Egloff & Männle, 2012, pp. 66ff.; Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2014, pp. 34–35). In the Portuguese case, a wide variety of trainings and internships are also featured in adult education programmes, focusing on research and providing data regarding a variety of topics. Overall, it can be questioned subsequently which ideas and expectations are linked to these existing possibilities to gain practical experiences during academic studies from different points of view in Germany, Italy, and Portugal. Further research is needed to analyse, for instance, the expectations students have regarding their internships or the ideas connected with internships from the perspective of the discipline of adult education in the different countries.

Summing up, the development of academic professionalisation appears as a progressive process faced with changing conditions. Even though the Bologna process as a milestone in the development of academic professionalisation is a framework shared by Germany, Italy, and Portugal, there are currently various differences between these countries in terms of the characteristics and pathways within the actual organisations. Further comparative research can reach a better understanding of the differences as well as the role that distinct national strategies related to adult education and lifelong learning play in these countries.

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