

Teachers and Trainers in Adult and Lifelong Learning: Asian and European Perspectives.

Edited by Regina Egetenmeyer and Ekkehard Nuisl (2010). Peter Lang, ISBN 978-3-631-61298-9, 223 pages.

Reviewed by Que Anh Dang¹

This book is an edited volume consisting of 17 papers that aim to explore and explain the concept and various aspects of professionalisation in adult and lifelong learning in Asia and Europe. The book is based on the selected papers presented at the ASEM² Conference '*Teachers and Trainers in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: Professional Development in Asia and Europe*' in Bergisch/Gladbach in June 2009, organised by the German Institute for Adult Education and the University of Duisburg/Essen.

The two editors are actively engaged in an ASEM research network on professionalisation of teachers and trainers in adult and lifelong learning. Regina Egetenmeyer is Professor for Lifelong Learning at the University of Mainz in Germany. Her research areas are international and comparative adult education, informal learning in the workplace, and academic professionalisation in adult and lifelong learning.

Ekkehard Nuisl is Scientific Director of the German Institute for Adult Education and University Professor for Adult Education at the University of Duisburg/Essen. Professor Nuisl is regarded as an outstanding contributor in adult education in national and international fields. He has provided leadership in professionalising adult education in Europe. Some of his over 600 publications in the last 30 years are available in several languages.

Egetenmeyer and Nuisl have edited this special volume to open the door for comparative studies in professionalisation of adult and lifelong learning in Asia and Europe.

This collection of papers, which is probably the first of its kind in the ASEM area, consists of contributions from 31 academics from 10 ASEM countries. The collection provides a variety of perspectives on the key issues of professionalisation in adult and lifelong learning, such as qualification requirements to become teachers and trainers of adults; future competences of teachers and trainers in adult education; effects of teacher training on adult learning; different pathways towards professional development of teachers and trainers; programmes and methods of training adult teachers; working conditions of adult education professionals; ethics, responsibility and accountability in adult education. It is noteworthy that several terms are used in the book to denote either specific or broader groups of people engaging in adult education, such as teachers and trainers of adults, adult educators, adult learning professionals, personnel working in adult and lifelong learning, adult education practitioners.

Adulthood and adult learning today, as the editors note, span a period of more than 50 years of a person's life; therefore it is of paramount importance to professionalise adult education. 'Professionalisation is a process of change in the direction of the ideal type; and as occupations professionalise they undergo a sequence of structural changes involving the establishment of training institutions, formation of professional organisations and mastery of theoretical knowledge and skills involved in the professional practice' (Shah: 62–63).

Although these two world regions have different traditions, approaches and needs with regard to adult education, the scholars share a common view that teachers and trainers in adult education form the

¹ MA.LLL. Academic Officer, Head of the ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat, International Research Policy Office, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark. Email: quea@dpu.dk

² ASEM stands for Asia–Europe Meeting, which was established in 1996 as an informal process of dialogue and cooperation between primarily the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Today ASEM consists of 27 EU countries and 16 Asian countries, plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat.

backbone of the system because they hold certain qualifications, competences and skills to ensure quality of programmes and learning activities for adults.

Following the editorial introductory section, the content of the book is organised in four main parts. The **first part** consists of four papers providing an overview of the state-of-the-art of professionalisation in adult and lifelong learning in Asia, Europe and two specific countries – China and India. The authors present interesting differences in situations and conceptual understandings of adult education, and hence, also in priorities and methods of professionalisation in adult education in the two regions. Panahon II, an Asian author (probably influenced by Confucius' philosophy), suggests values, such as honesty, justice, equity and benevolence, to be common elements for professional development of teachers and trainers across the region, whereas Egetenmeyer, a European author, highlights the importance of professional identity of adult educators, which should be built into qualification programmes as well as professional associations. In Europe there are two typical ways of qualifying as an adult educator: 1) university programmes with a formal academic degree in education and 2) further education programmes offered by adult education institutions (Egetenmeyer: 37). In India, as adult education still mainly deals with functional literacy, methods of training adult educators (functionaries) range from the cascade method (4–5 days), the direct training method (up to 70 hours), the participatory method (up to 4 months), to the open distance learning method to gain certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate degree from 10 Indian open universities (Shah: 63–73). China is more concerned with setting formal requirements of academic qualifications and personality quality to be qualified as a teacher of adults (Zhu et al.), whereas Europe looks for more and flexible transitions between different qualification routes within the European Qualification Framework for adult educators (Egetenmeyer).

The **second part** consists of six papers exploring specific aspects within the general scope of professionalisation.

Larsen and Wahlgren suggest that the effects of teacher training on teaching adult learners can be measured by looking at changes in teacher behaviours and student learning outcomes, but they also note that this exercise is difficult. Although there have been attempts to measure teacher knowledge as demonstrated through their ability to reflect on their own teaching, the effects of teacher training programmes on teacher behaviours, values or feelings are not well researched. Similarly, there are countless factors that influence student learning outcomes, including the life experiences of adult learners.

Milana and Skrypnyk argue that professionalisation in adult education should be determined by the knowledge of adult learning theories, ethics and autonomy possessed by individual practitioners, and the degree of trust placed in them by the adult learners, not only by the specific occupation they hold.

Lattke and Zhu present a number of research examples in Europe and China which define the core competences of adult educators. Since adult education is perceived differently in Europe and in China, specific competence requirements are also different. However, the authors note that in both China and Europe the competence profile of adult educators is complex and involves a multi-dimensional set of skills, personal attitudes and values as well as knowledge and understanding of the field.

Ling presents a survey of learner opinions on the key competence of adult teachers. She introduces the concept of 'humanity' in Confucius' philosophy, which refers to respectability, integrity, honesty, sincerity, reliability, benevolence and rational self-esteem, and argues that 'humanity' is an essential competence for lifelong learning professionals.

Koob discusses the concept of professional ethics and the relationship between ethics and responsibility of adult educators. He suggests that a set of professional ethics might be a quality feature and a mission for professional development of adult educators.

Pätzold explores the similarities and differences between accountability and responsibility in adult education and distinguishes the aims of these two concepts: one is process control and the other is process design in adult and lifelong learning.

Six papers in the **third part** introduce concrete initiatives and projects to professionalise adult education. The papers were presented by groups of authors, many of whom were directly involved in such initiatives and projects. The examples are professional development in Indian universities, study programmes in adult education at a German university, Validpack as a tool for assessment and validation of teachers' and trainers' competences in Romania, the Kirkpatrick four-step model to evaluate teachers and trainers in Indonesia, case-based and digital video learning in Germany, and the Delphi study of future competences of university professors in Latvia.

The **fourth part** presents an interesting synthesised comparison where the two editors draw specific differences and similarities as well as explain the reasons causing them. For instance, in Asia changes are concentrated more on expansion and development of the general education system for a young and growing population, whereas in Europe there is a greater focus on an ageing adult population. Labour market-driven knowledge and skills, and functional literacy, are the major concerns of adult and lifelong learning in Asia, while the aims of adult learning are more diversified in Europe. European authors discuss concrete issues such as participation, financing and institutionalisation of continuing education, whereas Asian authors express visions, potential ideas, desirable situations or scenarios, and social needs. The priority of Asia is to recruit additional adult teachers, but this is not the top priority of Europe, where setting benchmarks, quality standards of education and learning activities are gaining attention.

This concluding chapter helps the readers to review retrospectively along with other issues that have arisen in the volume. The chapter also identifies three activity fields for science and politics for future cooperation between Asia and Europe, namely 1) reliable data collection systems and enhanced exchange of data between the two regions, 2) development of coherent concepts of lifelong learning and coordinated synergies between different actors, and 3) identification of professionalisation models in adult and lifelong learning with potential to (re)contextualise in different countries.

In summary, these contributions are all readable and informative. They are well presented and have been capably edited. In such a large volume like this it is perhaps inevitable that there are some elements of repetition. Also some papers are more critically analytic, and some are more typically narrative and descriptive. The issues raised in this book are of major significance, but the papers that make it up are somewhat fragmentary. The last chapter is based on highly aggregate generalisation about the whole of Asia and Europe, given that a number of Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea and the majority of the Southeast Asian nations, and European countries were not represented.

By and large, the book is useful and informative to thoughtful practitioners and scholars in adult and lifelong learning, and hence, enables policy makers to respond and instigate.