BAEA

Becoming Adult Educators in the European Area

The art of being an adult educator

A handbook for adult educators-to-be

Tiina Jääger
(Ed.)

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Foreword

To be an adult educator is a challenge that entails special knowledge, skills and attitudes; it requires passion and patience. Likewise, learning involves cooperation between educators and learners.

How can we create good cooperation? How can one be a good adult educator? We hope this Handbook will serve as a useful companion to all those who practice in the field of adult education and that adult educators-to-be will find something innovative and useful for their teaching activities in it.

Tiina Jääger
Editor

Introduction

By Marcella Milana, Project coordinator

Teaching and training adults is a craft since adult educators draw upon specialised knowledge and create a space in which significant learning can occur. What distinguishes adult educators from other professions and occupations in education? Possibly, the characteristics of the learners they address are what make it unique.

Adults carry with them a relatively complex mix of knowledge and life experiences that facilitate – and sometimes hamper – their engagement in new intentional learning activities. This engagement is often voluntary but can also result from external demands that challenge one to acquire new expertise so to better cope with the complexities of changing working conditions.

To ensure that adult educators are able to meet the needs of the learners they address, many countries have established specialised courses and programmes for adult educators. In Denmark, for example, within the public provision of adult education and training, several courses and programmes address adult educators. Also, in Italy there are different courses and programmes preparing adult educators in the acquisition of specialised knowledge in teaching and training adults; although these offerings differ between regions. In Sweden, only two programmes are specifically aimed at adult educators, with an emphasis on those working in liberal adult education. In Estonia, a Professional Qualification Standard for adult educators has been established in recent years; hence, professional organisations now offer preparatory qualification courses for adult educators. In addition, some current bachelor and master programmes in adult education also provide individuals with the possibility of applying for a Professional Qualification Standard Certificate upon completion.

The experience of those working as adult educators in the above-mentioned countries, however, shows that they seek continuing professional development so to better cope with everyday challenges posed by teaching and training adults.

This Handbook addresses, in particular, prospective adult educators willing to learn more about some of the features that characterise this profession and the implications of working with adults. The Handbook, however, is also meant for those who already act as adult educators and seek new ideas to improve current work practices and future professional development.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the different roles adult educators may enact in their professional lives. Chapter 2 deals with the core concept of 'competency' in the field of adult education.

Chapters 3-5 focus on important aspects for professional development. In doing so, while these chapters provide inspiration for reflection and discussion,

they also present tools that can be further explored and used by adult educators. In particular, chapter 3 highlights the relevance and characterisation of the relationship between the adult educator and adult learners. Chapter 4 focuses on working methodologies that can help adult educators identify and sustain adult learners' motivation towards learning. Autobiographical methodologies are especially emphasised, as well as other active approaches. Chapter 5 discusses the role of self-reflection and critical thinking for adult educators in making self-evaluations and in improving their work practices. Finally, chapter 6 presents some reflections on the nature of adult education in Europe, today.

The Handbook, which was produced within the project Becoming Adult Educators in the European Area (BAEA), draws upon prior knowledge and experience brought into the project by its partners as well as new knowledge and experience gained through the realisation of a series of activities carried out in 2008-2010, e.g. documentary analysis, narrative interviews with adult educators, Delphi study.

For more information about the project and its products, we invite the reader to visit the project's website: www.dpu.dk/baea.

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Chapter 1: The adult educator's different roles

By Ivo Eesmaa

1.1. Supporting the subject; not educating the object

The title consists of four different words which are equally important if we try to describe the model of contemporary adult educators.

The first word – *adult* – refers to differently organised people with different interests, possibilities and cultural backgrounds, with their own ways of thinking and acting.

The second word – *educator* – is in direct connection with the term *education*. Education is always connected to a human being and is impossible to either give or take it, to exchange it with others, or to buy or sell it. A person is a subject in forming his/her education, and is therefore not an object for educating. This brings us to conclude: *adults cannot be educated by an adult educator.* An educator can merely assist adults as subjects in the action of forming their own education.

How can educators do this in the best possible way? The best possible way is to let adults learn from their educators. People learn in three main ways:

- **collecting** – collecting facts and knowledge about world around them (reading texts, listening to lectures, learning words, etc.);
- **experiencing** – learning by doing different things; and
- **accidentally** – most people's values, things they know or believe in, have come to them in a way they do not know (from people around them, from the media, etc.).

A good adult educator has to be good in creating situations for giving learners as much as possible to learn in all three ways. For the creation of these situations, educators must be good in playing *different roles*. As a result, in describing the model of the contemporary adult educator, we have to describe the different roles of the educator.

1.2. Core questions

In order to uncover the most important roles and describe an adult educator's skills and knowledge, we must answer these core questions:

- What is it that we are in?

- For whom?
- Who are we in it with?
- Why are we in it?
- How do we do it?
- With whom do we do it?

1.3. What are we are working on?

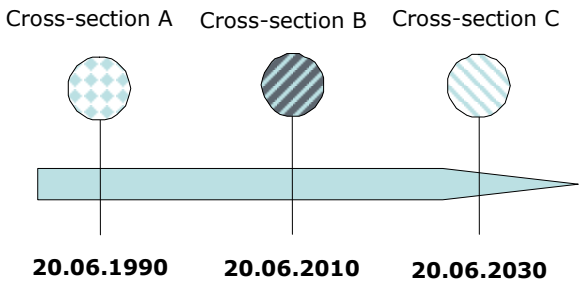
At first glance, asking this question feels odd. We are working on and in education, of course! What is education? Education is a set of skills and proficiencies. There is definitely a certain place for skills and for proficiencies – but there is more to it than that. The following is a short approach to education and the educator's role in it.

1.4. Education is a constant state of preparedness

Preparedness for what? Preparedness connotes what it is to live, work, learn and develop as a member of society and as a representative of a particular culture; and preparedness is based on understanding that culture. In other words, one's preparedness to cope in society is firstly based on one's cultural background, i.e. what kind of understanding one has of values, taboos, norms, what one's way of living is, etc. Thus, education cannot be either bad or good; education can only be sufficient or insufficient for coping in society.

One's necessary preparedness evolves with certain periods' norms, values, required skills and knowledge, etc. This is presented by the cross-sections in Figure 1. In the figure, the required preparedness is represented by circles with different patterns for every period of time. Clearly, the preparedness that was once required twenty years ago is insufficient today, and will be insufficient in twenty years' time.

Figure 1. Education in dynamic

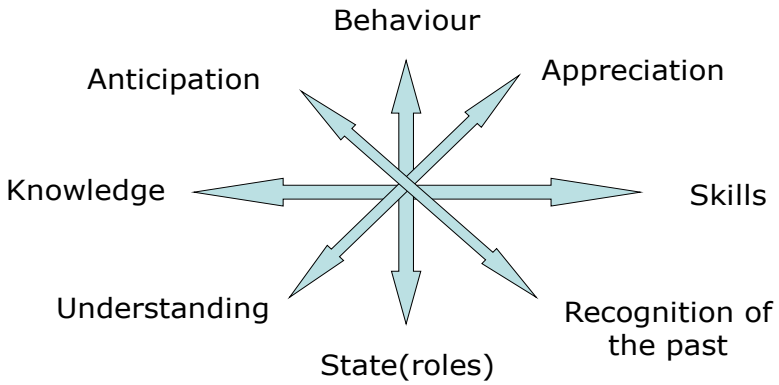


1.5. What does preparedness consist of?

When referring to preparedness, we have to go back to the concept of education. If we claim that education is a sequence of constantly changing states of

preparedness, then we are talking about a dynamic approach to education. Should we want to find out what the preparedness consists of, we have to approach the issue according to the static approach to education (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The static approach to education



According to this model (Eesmaa, 2003), preparedness consists of: knowledge and skills, position and behaviour, as well as comprehension and understanding.

Knowledge and skills

Neither of these carries meaning on its own, in terms of preparedness as a whole. Their unity is significant; i.e. knowledge has value only when some skills accompany it for some sort of implementation of knowledge. This is also true for the reverse – one can do nothing with very good technical skills if unaccompanied by knowledge.

Position and behaviour

This presumes a very precise understanding of the role, as well as behaving according to the role. An educator is able to appear in his/her (i.e. in a teacher's) role only when the learner is able to appear in his/her role (i.e. in a learner's role). In other words, there has to be something to learn from an educator; to learn that exact 'something' which an educator is hoping to convey to the learner.

Comprehension and understanding

To take part in a process, it is necessary to understand what kind of process one is dealing with. Similarly, in order to manage something, what is being managed has to be understood, and one also has to question whether it is possible to be managed at all. People and their behaviours have to be understood as well – in terms of knowing the past and foreseeing the future. Of course, it is not possible to foresee the future without knowing the past and without foreseeing a future, no responsibility can arise, since responsibility involves a decision-making process that is based on results. The results of one's decision-making have to be

foreseen, the most important of which is: *unity that has meaning*. All parts of education only work together. One cannot merely rely on skills and knowledge; one has to simultaneously recognise his/her role and to behave according to this role, understand the situations at hand, and in order to take sound decisions, must know what happened in the past and anticipate the results of decisions.

All in all, individuals must be ready for constant changes,which in turn, means constant learning. In other words, there is no reasonable alternative to lifelong learning, at least in a society where progress is a value.

1.6. About the significance of lifelong learning

During the past ten years, it can be said that rapid development has affected all parts of the world. There has been a rapid development of the economy as well as faster and faster globalisation, and all this has put people into a totally new situation that requires a completely different kind of preparedness than was required twenty years ago. The whole population needs to strengthen their preparedness at the same time, and in as short a period of time as possible, which best reveals the significance of lifelong learning:

- Society needs constantly learning citizens who have a high degree of adaptability and a sense of responsibility;
- Constant self-development is necessary for all people, irrespective of their formal status, i.e. citizen or non-citizen.

Clearly, it is impossible to send all citizens back to school. Thus, the preparedness described above can be created only through non-formal adult training activity. Precisely this is what people in different societies have been doing, and will continue to do in the future.

1.7. The roles of non-formal education

Non-formal education has several roles to play:

- It helps individuals understand differences in relation to themselves, neighbours, Europe and the whole world, arising from cultural identity or a people's diverse nature, in a continuously accelerating globalisation process;
- It supports the formation of an individual's co-responsibility for his/her own community and for society at large;
- It supports initiative and interest in one's surroundings;

- It supports self-confidence and faith in oneself as well as in the potential of one's society.

In relation to the roles mentioned above, there are four very important aspects in the development of a society as a whole, concerning non-formal education:

- The political aspect of non-formal education:
  a) Preparation for active participation;
  b) Cooperation and decision-making;
  c) Development of civic society;
  d) Formation of loyalty;
  e) Formation of tolerance necessary in the open and globalising world.
- The social aspect of non-formal education:
  a) Support of social coherence;
  b) Creation of equal possibilities to study;
  c) Support of social and cultural identity.
- The economic aspect of non-formal education:
  a) Formation of preparedness for reasonable consumption;
  b) Support of small business enterprises;
  c) Support of economic subsistence;
  d) Creation of a saving lifestyle.
- The cultural aspect of non-formal education:
  a) Preservation of the national culture, including traditions;
  b) Formation of values and norms;
  c) Formation of a creative individual with cultural identity.

Lifelong learning and self-development is possible if a favourable material and non-material environment has been created. The material environment consists of natural and artificial environments. The non-material environment is mainly considered as the social, intellectual and psychological environment.

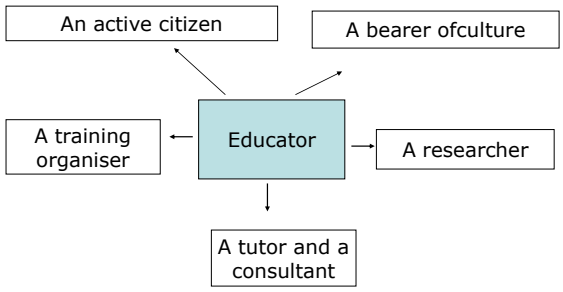
The educator plays the key role in the formation of the psychological environment necessary for learning.

The material environment plays a significant part in forming the learning process, but as learning is an intellectual activity, the non-material environment becomes primary.

The non-material environment is created ***by an educator*** and by a community through its cultural background.

The educator has several roles to play (Figure 3) in creating a favourable

Figure 3. An educator's roles



environment for learning – the educator is (or at least should be) ***active in public life, a researcher, a training organiser, a tutor and a consultant.*** First and foremost however, the educator is, just as all of us are, ***a bearer of culture.***

The educator appears simultaneously in all of those roles throughout the study process. This presumes the educator's preparedness to play all these roles, providing proper education and exercising constant self-perfection. Consequently, different kinds of competency are needed for successful activity.

Competence is considered to be the right to plan one's actions independently, make decisions, arrange activities and, furthermore, to have the necessary preparedness. In other words, a competent educator knows, sees the results in advance and dares to make the necessary decisions. A competent teacher is the one from whom others learn.

The necessary competence of an adult educator (which also applies for a regular school teacher) can be divided into three groups. First of all, according to the educator's roles described above, *general competency* is important.

Competency as a teacher

The necessary skills and knowledge, sufficient motivation and right orientation – preparedness to support and guide learning in the best possible and necessary way, according to learners.

Competency as an organiser of training

Preparedness to plan, prepare, carry out and assess through feedback and if necessary, correct the existing programmes and predict new trends in the training spheres.

Competency as a researcher

Preparedness to understand the connection between practical knowledge and theory in everyday activities, to systemise new knowledge relying on one's own practical knowledge, and in this way creating new theories, to be an interpreter of academic sciences rather than a guard who follows strict rules.

Competency as a public figure

Preparedness to set a good example, to be a spokesman if necessary, to be an analyst and a critic as an opinion-former of social life.

Competency as a bearer of culture

Preparedness to know and value the culture at different levels and to be able to put it into practice creatively in the working environment as well as in private life. Openness in intercommunication with other cultures – the ability to have a free dialogue with other cultures of the world. Filtering and domesticating global culture – the ability to treat the flow of faceless and rootless mass culture in a

discriminating way, picking out the useful and beneficial information. Knowing the local cultural context.

In addition to the general competency, *the field competency* should also be substantial.

Competency of nature
Preparedness to orientate in the phenomena of animate and inanimate nature, in principles connected with these; in the knowledge and ways of thinking of natural sciences, a nature-saving attitude to life.

Social competency
Preparedness to orientate in social life; understanding the social phenomena and developments of modern times and the past, preparedness to support democratic changes in society.

Competency of reflection and interaction
Preparedness to understand and assess oneself and the relations among people according to the norms of culture, to choose a suitable mode of behaviour, to have a healthy lifestyle, to solve the problems arising in connection with one's psychological, physical health and human relations with oneself.

Communicative competency
Preparedness to understand, record, transmit, change, interpret and create texts by means of language. In its broadest sense, communicative competency means the ability to communicate in different situations and on different subjects in written and in oral forms.

Technological competency
Preparedness to use modern technologies in one's everyday work and understand changes in people's life and work styles caused by technological changes, to function in a modern high-technology world, to be an economical user of existing resources.

Cultural competency
Preparedness to orientate in culture, to use artistic means for creative self-expression and self-determination.

Thirdly, as the educator's main activity is primarily connected with a certain subject, **subject competency** is also essential.

Subject competency covers:

- Formulating the subject's goals according to the general goals set in the study plan, composing the subject's plan according to the subject's goals, constant updating of new knowledge in the subject taught, and preparedness to change the subject's plan according to the latter;
- Knowing the methodology and methods necessary for teaching the subject.

1.8. Multiple roles of the educator

While each of the twelve roles has been described separately, in reality they are often interconnected and closely related to one another. Indeed, an educator may take on several roles simultaneously. However, a good educator need not be competent in all roles mentioned above. It would be unusual to find, and unreasonable to expect, one individual who possesses all the required competencies. Human resource planning should involve matching educators with the roles for which they have the greatest aptitude. The role model framework is a good tool used in:

- the assessment of the needs for staff to implement a curriculum;
- the appointment and promotion of teachers to meet educational needs within the institution;
- the organisation of staff development activities;
- the allocation of teaching responsibilities to staff;
- teacher evaluation by staff and students;
- self assessment by teachers of their optimum role;
- construction by a teacher of a *teaching* portfolio.

To put it briefly, *the good adult educator is much more than a lecturer.*

Chapter 2: The adult educator's competency

By Reet Valgmaa

Essential relationships for adult educators, in a professional sense, are created in relatively stable social groups like organisations, study-courses, trade-unions, professional unions, families, and circles of friends. All groups have certain characteristics that will determine an individual's possibilities to improve his/her interpersonal relationships. In this sense, all social relationships are ways in which one can get personal information – am I successful, how do others see me, where are the possibilities for development?

Nowadays, we see teaching as social action. This approach will highlight topics of power and interaction because all parts can influence one other in very different ways. Although there are variations in the time and place of teaching (virtual environments, etc.), there will always be a 'classroom' (space-time where we listen to each other and where the leading position of educator will be maintained, and where it will be the educator's responsibility to make decisions, share resources, organise and evaluate learners' activities).

Teaching without learning is not possible but learning without teaching is quite common. It raises the question: is a teacher needed at all, and does this person help learners develop? Assignments will acquire importance only when connected with a responsibility to accept them. In teaching situations, there is always tension/challenge (which could also be perceived as positive), discomfort, and the possibility of conflict. In the beginning, educators hold the power (the right to share resources and evaluate results), but authority must be acquired. In other words, an educator leads the action, but is this person also a leader of opinions? The personality of an educator is a very important educational tool; educators must inspire and be charismatic leaders in the development of studying partnerships.

We still talk more about 'learning disabilities' or 'low motivation' on the part of learners rather than addressing an educator's creativity and competency. This means we are used to talking about results, not reasons, we are used to judging and not talking about communication. There is no reason to expect that changes occur only with learners during study-processes. Partnership, as an interaction, requires the professional skill of an adult educator to change his/her behaviour according to changing situations. Rigid and non-emphatic adult educators do not see their possibilities adequately. In turn, this incompetency disturbs communication, which is a sign of underperformance. Competency always entails dynamics. Competency and self-consciousness can never be achieved once and for all – one has to take different decisions throughout the process, as illustrated in Chart 1.

Chart 1. W. Gephard & E. Nõmm's model (1997:23)

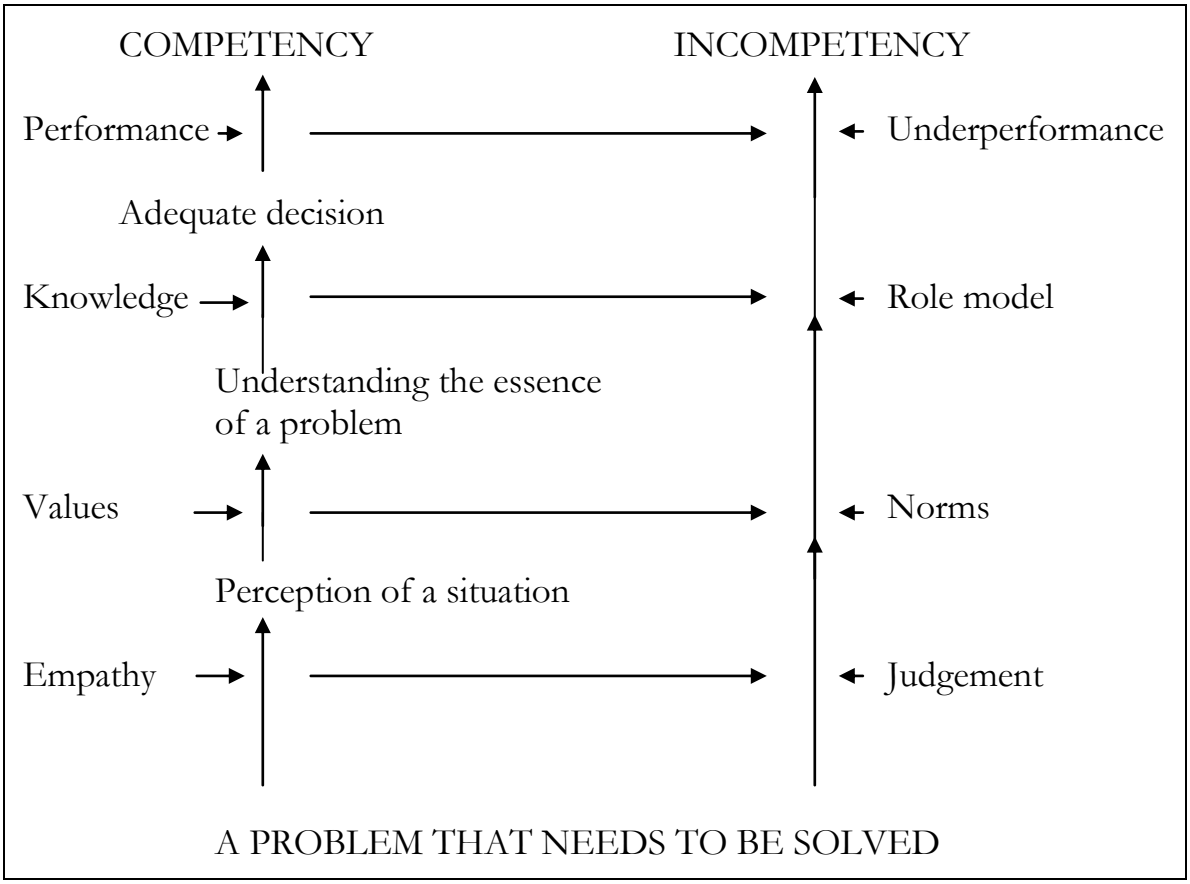


Chart 1 shows that one's perception of a problem can lead to adequate perceptions of a situation ("This problem is caused by…", "Secondary problems are…") or that an educator starts to judge too early ("I can't manage it", "It is not possible"). An analysis of practical situations too often results in incompetency, already on the first level. Values influencing one's perception of a situation can present one with the essence of a problem ("Learners are not able to solve the task because…", "They know, but are shy because of…", "Tolerance is not accepted in this study group"). If an educator is not able to use values, he/she bases his/her actions on norms ("By curricula we must…", "Tests are the best way to evaluate progress"). Understanding the essence of a problem, combined with knowledge, helps one make adequate decisions ("In this situation it is best to…", "Conflict in this level can be managed if I use interactive study methods"). If knowledge is not balanced with an understanding of the essence of a problem, a rigid role model will develop ("An adult educator is not offering childcare services", "My role is to share my knowledge, your task is to accept and learn it"). Adequate decisions must be presented in adequate ways, i.e. using pedagogical competency, including successful communication and trustful partnerships. Underperformance is the reverse – formal and distant relationships, ignoring feedback and lacking self-criticism. Many researches (Rhodes &

Beneicke, 2003; Jones, Jenkin & Lord, 2006) have highlighted similar reasons for underperformance: an intellectual ability that is inappropriate for the current job; inadequate technical skills; de-motivation; confusion and poor self-reflection; and self-perceived problems. How to become and stay competent as an adult educator?

2.1. On reflection in adult education

Legendary adult educators can be found all the time. There are not many of them but they can be recognised by this: "*Professionals are autonomous and use relevant knowledge and skills to make practical decisions in a range of ever-changing situations*" (Malderez & Wedell, 2007:11); "*All good teachers have unconscious dreams of how learners could change after teaching and they work for this change*" (Biggs & Tang, 2007:54); "*The legend seeks perceptual development, realizing that such improvement is not a destination as much as it is a journey; one never really is a success, one merely continues becoming one*" (Freeman & Scheidecker, 2009:29). So, we have to deal with processes that do not always follow professional standards. At the same time, the professional standards describe our current understanding of what professional is.

Andragogical situations are always dangerous for both parties because the possibility of not succeeding is ever present (conflict between knowing and unknowing, problems of capability, communicational barriers, etc.). This is quite a normal part of a learner's development but if we meet an adult educator who has this profile, we think about his/her incompetency. How to survive? One must continuously analyse what is going on (not only when starting to lose control). This is called reflection. An object of reflection can be anybody and anything in a classroom: a learner, a study group, an adult educator, actions (lectures, problem solving, evaluations, etc.) and conditions (space, time, study materials, etc.).

Donald Schön's term (1983) 'reflective practitioner' describes the behaviour of professionals when they meet obstacles and problems they are not prepared for. Nowadays, 'transformative reflection' is spoken about (Biggs & Tang, 2007) showing that we are not simply reflecting (as mirrors) upon a situation, but that we are reflecting upon our actions, which have certain aims.

We know that there are people who tend to be impulsive and others who tend to be reflective. One is not better than the other. There are professions in which impulsiveness is required for success. There are professions in which a person's tendency to reflect makes professional development a lot easier.

The beginner in adult education sees the problem in how to unite learned theories with reality. Experienced educators (who know what characterises their learning styles, enabling success) can distinguish the problem in how to reach the meta-level, i.e. create personal theory about teaching. Garry F. Hoban proposed

that "*teachers become meta-cognitively aware; that is, they become aware of their own learning strategies and are therefore consciously able to monitor their own learning experiences*" (2002:98). We must agree with Peter Jarvis (2004) and Knud Illeris (2007) who contend that teaching can also be learning for educators; through their reflection upon and development of teaching theory, the parts of their professional biographies that evolve.

Reflection means focusing on a subject (one's teaching style, conflict between learners, school culture, etc.) and the inner connections to be generalised through acquired meaning. It is not based on judgments (good/bad) but is a necessary process for seeing the bigger picture. It requires openness and a readiness to analyse. Such readiness means value-based professional behaviour – not activity based on norms or role models (i.e. self-defence). A reflecting adult educator doesn't simply look into a mirror; he/she focuses his/her attention and asks questions such as: "What characterises me as an adult educator?", "Why did learners fail to complete the task?", "Do learners ask questions because of interest or is somebody interested in conflict?", etc. This is always more or less connected with one's professional concept of him/herself: 'me'. If the reflective person has problems with self-determination, this will cause problems in situations what need empathy and an adequate perception of situations. Why is it sometimes said that some adult educators have problems with self-reflection? Fundamentally, it is because they are 'stuck' in judgements and are not open to information about themselves. Why do some adult educators have problems with creating a positive atmosphere for cooperation? This is because they are focused on norms and requirements rather than relationships. Formality defends and does not allow partnerships in what demands frankness. Why do some adult educators have strange conflicts with learners? This is because we see manipulative behaviour; learners are treated as objects, rather than subjects. Successful communication requires authenticity on the part of both parties; role models which are too rigid lead to power struggles. Why do some adult educators underperform? This is because they are not able to overcome ambivalence in social relationships; they lack self-confidence and responsibility in organising cooperation. The right side of Chart 1 can be seen as the self-defence of an adult educator; it is why we must focus much more on the personal development of adult educators rather than on subjects, methods, teaching materials and other traditional topics.

We would like to have colleagues whose decisions are based on values, not on judgements: that one will talk about what one knows about, that one knows what one does and does what one talks about – this is an authentic educator. As described by our Finnish colleagues: "*A specialist of learning and human development can be born only when he/she has critical knowledge of him/herself, environment, possibilities of influence, values and ability to overcome his/her "old me". He/she must constantly move on the border of known and unknown because only there the new will be born*" (own translation) (Nikkanen & Lyytinen, 2005:114). Professionalism requires reflective questions,

no matter the speciality, but Senge asserts that with respect to educators, the moral quality of their decisions is especially important: "*Only through research, analysis and doubt can we as teachers understand the influence of our decisions*" (own translation) (2009:284). So, we can say that teaching means self-development as part of professional readiness. Every historical era needs specific educators but we expect them to be creative and have a broad scope of knowledge, not to be narrow specialists who do what they are told without asking questions.

Chapter 3: The relationship between the adult educator and adult learners

By Lise Søgaard Lund

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the adult educator and the adult learner, which is a relationship closely connected to how we behave and react as adult educators and how we interact with our learners. There is no doubt that it is important that an adult educator be aware of his/her relationship to the learners, and that an educator's success and the learners' motivation in a learning situation depend on this.

Raymond Wlodkowski, an American professor of psychology, wrote in his book entitled, *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults* (2008), that instructors who motivate are unique and have their own style and strengths and that their characteristics can be learned, controlled, and planned for by anyone who instructs adults. Wlodkowski proposed five pillars on which rest what we, as adult educators, have to offer adults. If an adult educator lacks one of the pillars, he/she is less capable of responding to the many complexities that can strain an instructional relationship with adults.

The five pillars are:

1) expertise;
2) empathy;
3) enthusiasm;
4) clarity; and
5) cultural responsiveness.

These pillars can be considered as skills. They can be learned and they can be improved through practice and effort and they can be developed and enriched, according to Wlodkowski.

The following text will go through the five pillars and develop them further, in line with Wlodkowski's assertions.

Pillar 1. Expertise: the power of knowledge and preparation.
Wlodkowski broke expertise down into three parts: we as adult educators know something beneficial for adults, we know it well and are prepared to construct it with adults through an instructional process.

When examining the *first part* – we as adult educators know something beneficial for adult – Wlodkowski claimed that an educator for adults is different and quite unlike a teacher for children. This is the case since many adults are impatient in their learning processes, do not want to waste time, and that as learners, adults are demanding and righteous. When one teaches adults, one cannot speak of having an advantage of age or experience, because the group one teaches collectively holds so much experience in many ways. Adults are pragmatic learners, as Wlodkowski named them, which means that they want their learning to help them solve problems, build new skills, advance in their jobs or obtain a new job, and they want to learn something that has future value and can give them new possibilities for the future. We as adult educators have to ask ourselves: "What do I know that this group can understand, use, or apply that will help them?" If we try to answer that question, we can, as Wlodkowski asserted, avoid the classic mistake that many adult educators make: that if one is knowledgeable about a particular subject, one can teach effectively. One has to consider what the learners might know and connect knowledge to the learners' needs.

In examining the *second part* – we know our subject well – Wlodkowski maintained that nothing is more important. Adult educators must ask themselves the following questions, which will help them know if they know something well enough to teach adults in the subject: "Do I really understand what I am going to teach (and can explain it in words)?", "Can I give more than one good example of what I am teaching (a story, a fact, an analogy)?", "Can I personally demonstrate the skill (if one is teaching a skill)?", "Do I know the limits and consequences of what I am teaching?", "Do I know how to bridge what I am teaching to the world of learners – their prior knowledge, experience, interests, and concerns?", "Do I know what I don't know (adult educators who know their own frontiers can better qualify their instruction and can more adequately provide a future direction for needed learning)?"

With respect to the *third part* – we are prepared to convey or construct knowledge with adults through an instructional process – being well prepared shows that we as adult educators can look at our learners and have a conversation with them, which makes them participant in a dialog. Learners will appreciate educators who talk to them rather than at them because the adult educator's responsiveness is so apparent. Wlodkowski contended that one's preparation for teaching that motivates consists of whatever it takes for us as adult educators to feel confident – it might take hours for a novice to review, rehearse and organise material, for instance. Visual aids, slide presentations or handouts can help an adult educator see together with his/her learners. Adult educators must collect their thoughts, think over their roles and visualise their goals for their teaching and instructions – and think about how to meet the learners: the readiness enhances confidence and emotion and gives the adult educator the possibility to meet his/her learners.

Pillar 2. Empathy: the power of understanding and compassion.

This means that as adult educators, we have to have: *first*, a realistic understanding of the learners' goals, perspectives and expectations for what is being learned; *second*, have adapted our instruction to the learners' levels of experience and skill development; and *third*, must continuously consider the learners' perspectives and feelings.

First part: Adult educators need to have a realistic understanding of the learners' goals, perspectives and expectations for what is being learned. What methods can be used to gather information about the learners' goals, perspectives and expectation? Wlodkowski presented some methods inspired by Rosemary Caffarella. One could use written surveys and ask the learners, gather information regarding opinions, attitudes, needs and goals. Interviews, job and task analyses, tests, and of course conversations, can also be useful in gathering information about the learners' goals, perspectives and expectations.

Second part: We have adapted our instruction to the learners' levels of experience and skill development. As adult educators, we do not want people to fail – rather, the objective is that learners learn things that are within their reach. The instructional goal is to match the learners' experience and not to give them assignments which are too easy (so that they get bored) or too difficult (so that they lose their motivation).

Third part: We continuously consider the learners' perspectives and feelings. We need, as adult educators, to have an awareness of the learners, to understand them as individual human beings and to know that countless important things go on between educators and learners during the learning process. However, lots of things are invisible – and that is why Wlodkowski emphasised that empathy is as much an attitude as it is a skill. The skill which is most important for empathy is listening. The way we listen tells a lot to our learners and how much consideration we really give them – do we maintain eye-contact, do we cut them off when they speak, do we change the subject inappropriately, and what about our body language? It is important to listen for understanding because learners will feel more respected and respectful interest can elicit deeper dialogue. If an adult educator connects to learners with emotion, learners become willing to listen further. We need to attune our responses to learners, which involves tone of voice, body language and words. Validation is also important, and sometimes learners need to know that their feelings have been accepted by their educator – that an educator accepts how they are and how they feel. Empathy is a dynamic process and is very important when considering relationships.

Pillar 3. Enthusiasm: the power of commitment and expressiveness.

Often in his workshops, Wlodkowski asked learners to remember a motivating teacher of theirs, and their responses can be summed up as: someone who taught in a way that evoked their passion for what they were learning and gave value to it. Enthusiasm is important and enthusiastic adult educators manifest care about

and value their subject matter. They express their feelings and that is what encourages similar feelings within their learners. When adult learners see an adult educator who has energy and empathy, they tend to imitate those emotions and attitudes toward the subject – it's infectious.

However what is needed, is the expertise – if that is missing, a spirited educator can look rather foolish. Under the pillar of enthusiasm, Wlodkowski attributed two basic criteria: 1) that the adult educator value what he/she teaches for him/herself, as well as for the learners; and 2) that the adult educator displays his/her commitment with an appropriate degree of emotion and expressiveness. He argued that attending to these criteria will not only give the adult educator some indication of their enthusiasm but also help to sustain it in their instruction. Let us have a closer look at the two criteria.

1) We value what we teach for ourselves as well as for the learner.
   Wlodkowski expressed that our own interest in our subject is probably the surest indicator that we value it. This means that people who value their work usually develop a particular aspect of their skill or knowledge.

2) We display our commitment with appropriate degrees of emotion and expressiveness.
   Wlodkowski contended that allowing ourselves to have feelings about what we teach is the key to being enthusiastic. A little bit of dramatisation may help as well. Adult educators can tell interesting stories and use the arts and media, such as music or film excerpts. Lots of creative things will do well when we teach but being too extreme could lead one to perceive the adult educator as being self-centred, which would be counter-effective for learners. Wlodkowski highlighted some indicators to measure an adult educator's enthusiasm:

- Speaking with some variation in tone, pitch, volume, and speed;
- Gesturing with arms and hands;
- Moving about the room to illustrate points and respond to questions;
- Making varied, emotive facial expressions as called for;
- Displaying energy and vitality.

He recommended that adult educators can, for instance, try to videotape their own teaching to then be able to review at their behaviours. They may also ask a colleague they trust to give feedback. There is no ideal model for enthusiasm; how we express and accept enthusiasm varies across cultures – even in the same country.

As adult educators, we are sometime faced with solving the problem of a loss of enthusiasm. On this point, Wlodkowski found six potential destroyers of enthusiasm:

1) Satiation: It seems to you, that you are doing the same thing over and over again, and you feel bored. In this situation, you can try to change the content, process, environment, or learners' profiles in your instructional situation. It is known from systems theory, that small changes can change everything.
2) Stress: You maybe feel burned-out and that teaching takes too much out of you. Maybe you will have to contact somebody in your organisation that can help change your work conditions.
3) Lack of success: There can be many reasons underlying a feeling of lack of success. Maybe you feel some degree of incompetence or you seem not to be motivated when you teach. Consult somebody – a professional or a good colleague of yours.
4) Loss of purpose: Sometimes you no longer feel pride for the material you teach and feel that your teaching has become ordinary. You survive, but are not satisfied. A combination of distance, reflection, conferences and company from other enthusiastic practitioners can often foster self-renewal.
5) Living in the past: This is particularly relevant to those who have been adult educators for years. They can think that they had been better in the past, that learners are not as good as they used to be, that things will not improve, and that depression sets in. If you are together with people who think and feel the same way, you will not be able to break this pattern of thinking – so associate with other adult educators who look at the future with optimism.
6) Plateauing: Your instruction may be effective but you feel stagnant. There is no challenge in your job which means that you feel resigned rather that committed. You may raise your instructional goals and try new ways of teaching.

Pillar 4. Clarity: the power of organisation and language.

The adult educator must conduct instructions so that all learners can follow and understand what is being taught, even if it is not initially clear.

What may be easy for one person, may be difficult for another and this is why there must be a dynamic between what the adult educator does and what the learners bring into learning situations. Wlodkowski elaborated on the interaction between the adult educator's language and the teaching format, and the language and experience of the learners. As he contended, clarity is achieved when the adult educator provides a way for the flow of his/her knowledge to firmly connect with the learners. It is not easy to describe how we, as adult educators, can guarantee that we will teach with clarity. However, Wlodkowski pointed to two standards for performance – a guideline:

1) Plan and conduct an instruction so that all learners can follow and understand.
   This means that we, as adult educators, need material and examples to deepen understanding. This includes a planned introduction of the lesson, so the learners know what they will learn. In a learning situation, an adult educator may employ simulations, case studies and role playing so that the learners may benefit. It is also important to use words known to the learners.
2) Provide a way for learners to comprehend what is being taught, even if it is not initially clear.
   This depends on how and what we, as adult educators, teach. The adult educator needs to be aware of his/her instruction and interaction with learners.

Pillar 5. Cultural responsiveness: the power of respect and social responsibility.

The adult educator must create a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment. He/she must engage the motivation of all learners, and must relate course content and learning to the social concerns of learners and make it relevant to the broader concerns of society. If a person respects another, he/she will seldom give the other an order to do something. What is more, this person will be interested in the other's opinion.

As a part of this pillar, Wlodkowski elaborated on the respect for diversity – people are different in many ways and because of many different experiences. The adult educator must be socially responsible in understanding why the following guidelines are necessary and relevant:

1) Create a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. Wlodkowski wrote that a safe learning environment is a better place for learners. He further emphasised how inclusion, attitude and meaning make learners feel competent;
2) Engage the motivation of all learners. As adult educators, we need to sense the learners' culture, perspectives and interests and that means that we need to respect diversity;
3) Relate course content and learning to the social concerns of learners and the broader concerns of society.

To sum, Raymond Wlodkowski examined and described the relationship between adult educators and learners. He did not only present theoretical material, but also suggested some realistic ways in which one could develop and behave in practice in different learning situations, focusing on how the relationship between adult educators and learners could work. The first step for

the adult educator is to be aware of the relationship, which is complex and has many facets and perspectives.

The adult educator can have a successful relationship to the learners if he/she considers and tries to include Wlodkowski's thoughts about relationship in practice.

Chapter 4: The (auto)biographical approach in the development of motivation in adult learners

By Andrea Ciantar

4.1. Is there a specific motivation and willingness to learn on the part of adult learners?

One of the aspects that most significantly differentiates adult learners in relation to children and teenagers, is certainly the difference in motivation and willingness to learn.

One important aspect of this concerns the level of *dependence/independence*. The child is in a highly dependent relationship vis-à-vis the educator and the school system with regard to 'what and how' he/she learns. The situation is very different for the adult, who (usually) makes an autonomous choice to start a learning programme based on his/her personal interests, practical needs or job requirements. The adult thus chooses to start and continue in an educational path only if he/she experiences correspondence with a personal need[1].

Another important aspect concerns the *greater/lesser valorisation of the learner's experience*.

It is in fact obvious that children have accumulated much less experience than adults. Much learning in children therefore occurs in the form of imitation or re-proposition of a model proposed to them by adults. In adults, however, it is obvious that what is offered to them as learning content interacts with what they already know, with their own system of meaning and their own 'intentionality':

> *While in the traditional school system, the focus is on new learning, in adult education the reference is to "complex" learning, which occurs above all through the modification – and not simply mere addition to – of the subject's prior cognitive field. It is no accident therefore that reflection on experience, techniques of problem solving, case studies, simulations and role play is what most distinguishes the originality of the best practices in adult education* (own translation) (Albert, Gallina & Lichtner, 1998:11).

A third aspect has to do with the modality of thought; in the sense that the adult, unlike the child, ought to be able to avail him/herself of all the modes of thought, including logical-formal thinking.

[1] For example, some studies show that in the Italian experience of the so-called "150 ore", the main reason for dropping out is linked to conflicts arising between the educational objectives proposed by the institution and the interests of the adult learner.

In addition, we can also observe that while motivation for learning in the child is – in many ways – connected to explicitly *extrinsic* aspects (in the sense that it is requested by the parents, or the teacher, and the fact that the child is rewarded by these adult figures), motivation in the adult would seem to be more *intrinsic*, related both to instances connected to the inner sphere of the individual and to his/her social dimension and role (as citizen, worker, head of a family, etc.).

Obviously these differences – referred implicitly to a specific idea of an adult – will be borne out in real situations to different extents. But in any case, the particular and different motivation and willingness to learn in the adult is a strongly specific characteristic. This will have a powerful leverage effect and will at the same time present a challenge for educators and organisers in the field of adult education who in effect are asked to ensure that the educational offering responds to this potential and these needs.

This chapter therefore seeks:

- to briefly explore what characterises the contexts of adult education, given the fact that they must take into account the particular motivation for learning in adulthood;
- to describe, along general lines, the principles on which the autobiographical approach in adult education is based;
- to illustrate some examples of practices, connected to the biographical and autobiographical approach, aiming to draw out and reinforce motivation in adult learners.

Through these elements we wish to furnish both theoretical and methodological tools useful both to future adult educators and to those who already work in the field and are looking to further their knowledge and skills.

4.2. What characterises contexts of adult education

In his famous essay, published in the 1970s, *Modern practice of adult education. Andragogy versus pedagogy*, Malcolm Knowles identified what it is that radically distinguishes andragogy (as the art and science of fostering adult learning) from pedagogy. The comparison below, which is often cited in the field's literature, has maintained fascinated interest over the years.

Table 1.1 – Comparison of the premises of pedagogy and andragogy
Source: Albert, Gallina & Lichtner, 1998; based on Knowles 1993, 1996.

	Pedagogy	**Andragogy**
Concept of the self	Dependence	Increasing autonomy
Experience	Of little value	Learners constitute a rich learning resource
Willingness to learn	Biological development Social pressure	Changing functions of social roles
Time perspective	Application is postponed	Application is immediate
Orientation towards learning	Focused on the subject matter	Focused on problems

Subsequently, the strict distinction made between pedagogy and andragogy was to be questioned; some pedagogists were to argue in fact that a certain type of 'hetero-directed' learning context was necessary for learning which involved pre-defined procedures, knowledge and processes, and which did not require personal elaboration; while 'self-directed' learning – that is, learning where a strong active role on the part of the learner is required, and where it is fundamental that the learner should confer meaning on what he/she is learning – was to be considered a distinctive trait not only of adult education, but an important component of learning at all ages (albeit with due cognitive, emotional and social differences)[2].

Table 1.2 – Comparison of pedagogy and andragogy programmes
Source: Albert, Gallina & Lichtner, 1998; based on Knowles 1993, 1996.

	Pedagogy	**Andragogy**
Climate	Authority-oriented Formal, competitive	Reciprocity; respect, collaboration; informal
Planning	By the teacher	Mechanisms of cooperative planning
Definition of needs	By the teacher	Reciprocal self-definition
Definition of aims	By the teacher	Cooperative negotiation
Lesson Plan	Based on subject logic Content units	Sequences, based on willingness to learn Problem units
Activities	Techniques for content transmission	Techniques based on experience (research)
Evaluation	By the teacher	Common re-definition of needs Common evaluation of the programme

[2] Knowles himself was to consider the term "andragogy" more as a tendency, a point of referral rather than that of a homogenous and integral system of theory and practice. The learning methods described by using the term "andragogy" are intrinsic and possible in every learning process.

Despite these developments, however, Knowles' scheme still proves to be useful. For example, it makes it possible to distinguish between two types of educational contexts: one based on a substantial dependency of the learner and on a model of knowledge transmission of the vertical type; the other is based on dialogue, negotiation and valorisation of the learner's experience.

While these are aspects to be found in different educational contexts, there is no doubt the characteristics indicated in the column "Andragogy" are those which most characterise adult education.

But it must be kept in mind that not all adults fall under the – more or less defined – model implicit in Knowles' theory. Reality is of course more complex. It is not rare, for example, for those involved in adult education activities to encounter adult learners who prefer more vertical learning models with the teacher at the desk in front of the classroom. Another common situation is one with adults who have low levels of education and have been away from a learning context for many years or have not been able to develop cognitive skills and for whom it is by no means easy to take on an active role in the learning process.

The supposed autonomy and self-confidence of the adult, compared to the child, is often sorely challenged, especially in a time of crisis at different levels – economic, cultural, identity – when contexts are ever changing. We now therefore prefer to speak of the "*multi-dimensionality of the self, and of pace of development (or of involution at variable and differentiated speeds for the different spheres that make up the complex adult identity)*" (own translation) (Albert, Gallina & Lichtner, 1998:13).

4.3. The (auto)biographical approach: from sociology to adult education

The title of the above-mentioned book by Knowles was translated into Italian as: *La formazione degli adulti come autobiografia* (Adult education as autobiography). The reason for this translation is clear: if we follow Knowles' theory with regard to the 'appropriate' (or perhaps we might say 'ideal') adult education path, then we must affirm that the adult in the fullness of his/her social and personal functions, cannot but be the active author of his/her own learning path. Thus adult education, according to Knowles, is autobiographical in its essence. In this regard, other authors speak of the intrinsically 'self-learning' character of the autobiographical perspective in education. There is thus a first meaning of this word, which even before describing a methodology or a specific approach describes a fundamental way of looking at education and adult education.

This vision – in some cases – corresponds to practical theories in which adult education takes on a function of emancipation and transformation not only of the individual but of society as well. As Paulo Freire wrote:

> *Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word – which is work, which is praxis – is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of few men, but the right of every man* (1970:76).

Paulo Freire, Don Milani, Danilo Dolci, are some of the names of great educators who have made education autobiographical – without calling it such – by asking the people they were involved with to start from themselves, from their own stories and from there, to define the problems within reality. This is education which places itself in a critical stance with regard to reality, a type of education which does not limit itself to the reproduction of what exists, but which aims to be critical and change, based on an explicit ideal of the valorisation of the individual and social and human justice.

This phenomenon, which left a mark both on the theoretical level and in terms of educational practice, but on society and history as well, was accompanied (and in some ways preceded) by another change, which migrated – in some way – from sociology to adult education.

Starting with the Chicago school in the early decades of the 1900s, the biographical approach made its début in the social sciences, primarily through the use of life stories and autobiographical documentation as resource sources. But in actual fact, what was being proposed was not just a new method of social research, but a way of looking at society and the role of knowledge. The stories in fact are at the same time a product of the social constructs of which the individual and society are the expression, and the ways in which the individual and society 'take possession' of knowledge, meaning and practices – the ability to develop critical thought and thus the possibility of modifying reality. As Gaston Pineau and Jean Louis Le Grand wrote:

> *The life story is a particular socio-linguistic practice which represents the high point of concrete mediations that have produced the individual who creates his own story, who seeks, that is, to express within the narrative form the different movements which make and unmake him/her. The expression of these mediations leads therefore to the construction of an open-pit mine of explicit knowledge, practical, concrete, experiential knowledge which is strongly tied to the uses which generated it* (own translation) (Pineau & Le Grand, 2003:128).

The biographical approach then became not only the patrimony of sociology, but was also introduced into the theory and practice of adult education in various ways: as a tool of educational research and as an orientation tool, through the possibility of drawing out experiences and competences; as a training tool (both for adult learners and the educators themselves), since it allows the individual to reflect on him/herself and on prior experiences and to tap these experiences for elements to use in re-formulating his/her plans, etc. (we will return to this point later).

The development of narrative methodologies in education led various scholars to distinguish between the term 'autobiographical' and 'biographical'. The important point here is not so much the use of the technique of writing about oneself (which characterises the autobiographical approach in the strict sense), or of the interview and the gathering of the elements of a life story (proper to the 'biographical' approach) (Alberici, 2000).

The central point of this concept instead lies in the fact that these approaches – whether they use writing about oneself or the interview method – are based on practices which help to put the subject at the centre of attention and thus facilitate his/her role as 'author of his/her own learning path' and personal development. Such practices in fact are characterised – regardless of the narrative technique used – by aspects like: reflection, development of the capacity for narration and organisation of one's own sphere of meaning, and the development of a capacity for relating to others (by telling one's story to others).

Finally, it is important to note that the autobiographical – or (auto)biographical[3] – approach in adult education is not based on a preconceived idea of the adult as someone who has achieved self-determination and is in possession of an equilibrium and independence on the basis of which he/she sets out to develop skills and enrich his/her knowledge – thus, a picture which portrays the adult as a ship's captain who is quite certain of his/her route and of the position he/she occupies in the milieu to which he/she belongs. Adulthood instead appears in its perennial incompleteness, as a restless and constantly changing stage in life, especially in our postmodern and globalised society. The autobiographical dimension is thus the possibility and necessity to question one's life, to redefine one's world of meaning and values, a world which can also undergo deep revisions; it means finding a sphere of autonomy in the life of the subject, going beyond economic, political and social mechanisms, which tend to crush the individual within predefined dimensions and values (mostly in an implicit way).

The autobiographical journey is more similar to the journey of Ulysses, and brings with it an ineluctable uncertainty, but also adventure and the possibility of discovery and freedom.

4.4. The (auto)biographical approach: examples of practices

We will now describe some examples of practices involving the autobiographical approach, by focusing on two criteria: how autobiographical methodologies intervene in the different stages of the learning process; and within this process,

[3] Often the approach is referred to as '(auto)biographical', where the brackets indicate reference to an autobiographical dimension which is nevertheless present even when biographical methods are clearly involved.

we will take an in-depth look above all at the practices which aim to work on developing, drawing out and defining motivations for learning.

Before going into detail however, we will see what form autobiographical practices take in the different stages of the adult education learning process.

4.5. Reception and orientation

The stage in which the learner is first encountered and welcomed is a very important moment in the learning path. It is an occasion to encourage the adult to reflect on his/her learning needs, expectations, prior knowledge and skills, as well as on the way in which he/she learns. Clearly, this is a crucial stage for working on the learner's motivation: "*the aim of the welcome phase is to transform the bureaucratic act that led an adult to fill in the registration form into motivation for returning to education*" (own translation) (Albert, Gallina & Lichtner, 1998:77).

In the face of this need, the biographical approach is an effective tool for drawing out and recognising the learner's prior experiences (patrimony of experience). Notwithstanding specific programmes, there are two recurring elements by means of which the approach is effected:

- creation of a narration of personal experiences in forms that can be transmitted to others;
- de-construction and analysis of the narration in order to identify recognisable elements which have meaning within the learning context (thus, prior skills and abilities, motivation, certifications, personal development plans...).

As an example of this, we will cite the experience within the *Adults not only in the school* project[4], in which a group of adults entered a training path consisting of different stages, inspired by the approach based on a Portfolio of Skills. The stages included:

A. A group meeting, in which the characteristics of the group itself were defined on the basis of an entry questionnaire (age, education, work experience, reason for dropping out of school, etc.), followed by a discussion on questions such as: time devoted – until that point – to education; usefulness or non-usefulness in real life of what was learned in school; reason for dropping out of school.

[4] Carried out by Irsae ("Istituto Regionale di Ricerca Sperimentazione e Aggiornamento Educativi", Regional Research Institute of Educational Testing and Upgrading) in Emilia Romagna in 1994.

B. This was followed by an individual interview, which again dealt with the topics of the group discussion, but in a more in-depth manner. The interview was conducted in a discursive way so that the narrator could follow his/her own narrative thread.
C. The interviewer then transcribed the interview, organising the information into three columns; questions, answers and noteworthy elements.
D. Returning the interview to the participant was ultimately an occasion to better define on the basis of the story told, his/her interests, work habits and pace, explicit credits, and implicit credits, as elements which will be used to make up the learning agreement.

The entire process ultimately aimed at drawing out the motivation for study from within an implicit and unclear dimension, to then bring it within a dimension in which the learner is more aware and in agreement with his/her motivation.

4.6. The skills assessment

The skills assessment is a well structured and established technique which aims to help the adult subject become aware of his/her knowledge and skills; this awareness will also make it possible to communicate information to others. However, the individual usually finds it difficult to recognise such potential resources; hence, the importance of making use of a qualified expert who can facilitate the process.

There are different defined and established procedures for the skills assessment, but in general they all aim in their outcomes to develop a summary which includes: the subject's most significant experiences; knowledge and skills; competences defined within different spheres, including professional, personal relations, intellectual, and technical.

As one can easily imagine, narration is fundamental to developing the skills assessment. An experience lasting many years in an Italian university[5], gives us an account of how of the autobiographical and biographical story approach is used.

Once an agreement regarding the skills assessment contract has been reached, the workshop procedure requires each of its participants to write a brief introduction to their life story, including one or two episodes considered to be of particular significance in their existential paths (the episodes may be related to work, education, personal life, etc.).

[5] We are referring to the Workshop on the Skills Portfolio, conducted by Professor Paolo Serreri, in the Adult Education Department at Università Roma Tre, headed by Professor Aureliana Alberici (Alberici, 2000).

This stage is followed by a semi-structured interview which aims to trace the fundamental stages in the life of the person, in the spheres described. The interview, lasting about an hour, takes the form of a real life story, although going into deep problems in the inner life of the subject is avoided (on the level of deontology, the skills assessment cannot be developed for people in therapy or who are undergoing an emotional crisis).

Afterwards, there is a phase in which self-analysis forms are filled in to clarify specific aspects related to the individual (related to doing, knowing, experience, desires, and plans).

A phase follows in which all the material produced is re-read with the aim also of drawing out the more general aspects of the biographical path before finally inserting all the material within the skills portfolio and defining a personal development plan.

4.7. In specific training

Another important aspect concerns the use of autobiographical methodologies in specific training. The experiences within this sphere are many and diverse, and it is not easy to give a brief account of them. However, we can indicate two fundamental approaches:

1) the aim and content of the training activity is the life story of the individual (and thus writing about oneself is aimed at drawing out existential issues, problems, reflection on and elaboration of experience, in order to support the path to change and construct new plans);
2) writing and telling one's story has the function of developing specific content and knowledge in a personal sense.

The first approach finds concrete form in the autobiographical workshop, in which participants have an opportunity to recall and tell their stories. Writing about oneself, in fact, is a time of self-development connected to adulthood par excellence; and autobiography itself, we should remember, is above all a story of education:

> *We recognise ourselves as adults precisely when – going quite beyond the characteristics most commonly recognised for this stage in life which is more mysterious than it seems (autonomy, responsibility, power, authority, generative capacity, etc.) – we are capable of mentally organising our past and reflecting on the present using a number of compositional criteria (...) which permit us to recognise ourselves through writing and a more meditated oral narrative* (own translation) (Demetrio, 1996:21).

Thus, one writes and tells one's story for pleasure or out of need, in order to understand oneself (caring for oneself), but also to leave a trace of oneself. Among the various forms of telling one's story we should underline those actions, including both telling one's own story and the story of others, which are a form of social and civic commitment today; there are many people who pass on their testimonies or who collect the stories of those who normally lack a platform for being heard, in order to make a contribution to the body of common knowledge and to change society. And this too is a form of adult education, as active citizenship.

The second approach, as we mentioned above, shows that autobiographical activities can contribute – in general – to motivating adults in learning specific subject content.

Experiences in this sector are of the most various kinds, but generally they all have a common characteristic: through in telling of one's own experiences, the adult is invited to deal with specific knowledge and thus develop his/her relation to such specific knowledge in a personal way.

One example among many is an ongoing experiment, having been conducted for many years, by the Chair of History of Philosophy, at the University of Viterbo[6]; an experiment named *Philosophy and Autobiography*. In this experiment, the students are first made familiar with autobiographical writing by being asked to write an introduction of themselves. This also has the purpose of creating an atmosphere of communication and trust within the group.

Afterwards, the students are encouraged to write on specific philosophical issues – starting from their personal experience – as they are encountered in the course. For example, in a course on *Montesquieu's Persian Letters*, the topics suggested were: "Let me tell you about myself", "An important journey for me: what makes us set off on a journey?", What happens when we encounter something that is different from us?", to then go on – as occurs in Montesquieu's philosophical novel – to an exploration of the theme of the passions through themes such as, "Narrate an episode or a period of your life in which you were led by a passion", and so on (Boccara & Crisi, 2003).

As one might imagine, the impact of such a methodology in terms of involving the students is great. Participants are in fact encouraged to relate to concepts and knowledge not only abstractly, but in a very personal way. The motivation on which this method acts at this stage is not so much the more general one which led the adult to enrol in an educational programme, but the more specific one connected to particular knowledge or skills.

Another recent experiment was conducted within a training course for teachers in the field of adult education, carried out by the Università Popolare di Roma in

[6] By Professor Nadia Boccara, and Francesca Crisi.

collaboration with the Lazio Region, which involved the application of autobiographical methods – combined with Cooperative Learning approaches – to different content and teaching aims. In fact, even though the possibility of applying such an approach seems more immediate for some types of content (for example, in the humanities and linguistic fields), the experiment showed it is possible to do so for technical types of content as well. There is indeed always a personal motivation, a personal idea involved, which becomes the driving force to learning and when this is harnessed, effectiveness is ensured. A very simple example of a practice which can be adapted to all types of content involves the underlying story, and sharing of prior knowledge or motivations, which led to the study of that specific subject or topic. The teacher – in this case – starts the lesson by asking students to pair off and share what they already know about the topic of the day, or even their expectations, questions, etc. and to briefly note down these aspects in writing. Afterwards, groups can share what they came up with, within the entire group.

For all its simplicity, the example is capable of giving an account of another component of these approaches and that is their role in creating a climate of communication within the class.

To summarise, the methodology applied to specific learning contexts, in general, can be applied at various levels:

- to draw out and share prior knowledge and interests relating to the specific subject being taught;
- to facilitate a personal rapport with specific knowledge, in relation to the personal development plan of the learner;
- to create a climate of communication within the class.

The instruments used for the purpose are varied, but again these can be summarised as follows:

- interview and oral storytelling;
- autobiographical writing;
- use of artistic forms of expression (poetry, drawings, photographs, videos…).

4.8. In assessment

Another interesting area to consider is that of assessment, which within the perspective of autobiographical methodology, takes on above all the form of self-assessment and offers an important opportunity for reflecting on one's educational experiences. This type of assessment, which is of the qualitative type,

often taps into the sphere of personal relationships; telling others (a classmate, a tutor or teacher) what one believes one has learned, how one plans to use this knowledge and in what areas one wishes to further one's knowledge, which are all important stimuli for the learner.

Finally, there are two other areas in which autobiographical methods were first applied.

The first is in the field of education research, in which the interview method has been widely used (Alheit & Bergamini,1996; Alberici, 2001).

Another area is the field of training future educators. Many different experiences here have established important principles and have served as training for others and there is a great deal of literature available on them. For example, there is Josso and Dominicè's course entitled, *Life Stories Workshop*, run at the University of Geneva, for students of the Faculty of Education. It is organised into three different phases:

1) a phase introducing the method;
2) a phase of oral story-telling, in which each participant – on the basis of an outline previously prepared – tells his/her story to the group; the socialisation then makes room for possible development or requests for clarification and is preparatory to the writing – on the part of the participant – of the story he/she has told, as well as the choice of another's story which he/she is to tell;
3) the last phase consists in the analysis of the stories written (Alberici, 2000; Formenti, 1998).

The different levels on which the *Life Stories Workshop* aims to operate, which we also find in many programmes applying autobiographical methodologies training future adult educators, can be summarised thus:

- the individual level of the participant's education, in relation to his/her personal experience;
- the methodological level, and the application of the method to research and different aspects of adult education programmes;
- the theoretical level, with regard to adult learning processes (ibid.).

In the final analysis, the (auto)biographical approach is a perspective and a set of practices and methodologies that can play an important role in adult education on different levels:

- drawing out and reinforcing motivation to learn;
- developing a personal rapport with knowledge and learning;
- developing communicative functions and personal interaction in adult education processes.

Chapter 5: To promote critical reflection among adult learners

By Lise Søgaard Lund

In his book entitled, *The skillful teacher*, Stephen Brookfield wrote that he believes,

> (…) *that skilful teaching is a highly variable process that changes depending on any number of contextual factors. What does remain constant about skilful teaching is its being grounded in three core assumptions. How these assumptions frame practice varies enormously with the specific contexts of teaching, but their applicability holds true across diverse situations. Those three assumptions are that:*
> - *Skilful teaching is whatever helps student learn.*
> - *Skilful teachers adopt a critically reflective stance toward their practice.*
> - *The most important knowledge skilful teachers need to do good work is a constant awareness of how student are experiencing their learning and perceiving teachers' actions* (2006:17).

Brookfield is a leading American researcher in adult education who has worked with facilitating in an attempt to qualify the learning process. In connection to facilitating, Brookfield addressed reflection and critical reflection, which is the focus of this chapter. Brookfield has emphasised how important reflection and critical reflection are necessary if one aims to become a skilful adult educator.

In his book entitled, *Training educators of adults*, Brookfield wrote that the nature of adult learning has been interpreted in a number of ways. After having referenced a variety of researchers (Hostler, Paterson, Daloz, Levinson, Mezirow), he wrote:

> (…) *as a form of adult learning, critical reflection entails more than purely cognitive activities such as logical reasoning, or scrutinising arguments for assertions unsupported by empirical evidence. It involves our recognizing the assumptions underlying our beliefs and behaviors. It means we can give justifications for our ideas and actions. Most importantly, perhaps, it means we try to judge the rationality of these justifications. We do this by comparing them to the range of varying interpretations and perspectives* (…) *four component elements have been identified as central to critical reflection in adult life: assumption analysis, contextual awareness, imaginative speculation, and reflective scepticism* (Brookfield, 1988:325).

But what does Brookfield mean when he refers to assumptions?

5.1. Assumptions

Brookfield understands reflection as how one enquires about one's assumptions. He spoke about "hunting assumptions" and as he wrote: *"In many ways we are our assumptions. Assumptions give meaning and purpose to who we are, and what we do"* (Brookfield, 1995:2).

Brookfield distinguished three categories of assumptions: paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal. *Paradigmatic assumptions* are the basic assumptions one holds and uses to structure the world into categories. Perhaps one does not recognise them as assumptions but sees them as objective, valid renderings of reality. As an example of paradigmatic assumptions, Brookfield mentioned how one could suppose adults as self-directed learners. Changing these assumptions takes a long time and people need to have acquired lots of experience and have encountered contrary evidence in order to change. Changing paradigmatic assumptions produces consequences for people's lives.

Prescriptive assumptions build on paradigmatic assumptions, but are about what one ought to be doing, or what ought to be happening, in a particular situation. Examples include how one believes adult education should be, how one supposes adult educators should behave or how the relation between learners and educators should be – and if one takes for granted the paradigmatic assumption that adults are self-directed learners, teaching plans will be designed according to this assumption.

Causal assumptions are the easiest to uncover. These assumptions help us understand different parts of the world and how processes can be changed, given different conditions. The beginning of the reflective process leads one to discover and examine these assumptions. As examples of causal assumptions, Brookfield mentioned: if one uses learning-contracts with students, this will increase student self-directedness or if adult educators create a trustful environment for learning, this will create the condition where mistakes can be made in front of learners, they can be openly admitted to, and in turn, this can create a space where mistakes performed by learners are accepted.

When one works with and discovers one's assumptions, a reflective process begins. When one tries to understand critical reflection, one needs to know something about reflection.

Brookfield provided some examples of assumptions (1995:3-7), and wrote that if one does not examined and "hunt" for one's own assumptions, one might take it for granted that what he/she wants to convey through his/her actions (i.e. with the learners) corresponds exactly to how others read into and interpret such actions and all intended meanings In other words, as an adult educator, one needs to "hunt" for one's assumptions so as to get a deeper understanding of what one is really doing.

One of the examples, built on what Brookfield meant as what is familiar for adult educators (common sense): *It's common sense to cut lecturing down to a minimum,*

since lecturing induces passivity in students and kills critical thinking. The adult educator needs to remember that before students can (as Brookfield proposed) engage critically with ideas and actions, they need grounding in a subject area or skill set. Students can't expect to think critically before a process is modelled for them. The adult educator needs to question his/her own assumptions, acknowledge ethical dilemmas, refer to inconvenient theories, facts, and also needs to demonstrate openness to alternative viewpoints, encouraging students to do likewise. When the educator opens this process up, he/she can catalyse the student into thinking critically – it is a way to promote critical reflection among students.

In a second example: *It's common sense that students like group discussion because they feel involved and respected in such a setting. Discussion methods build on principles of participatory, active learning.* Students will be sceptical of group discussion if an educator has not worked by first modelling his/her own commitment to the process. Ground rules for discussions also need to be created.

As we can see, there can be different arguments that are central for the reflective process which also enable one to look at things from a deeper perspective – what assumptions have we derived from others and their experiences? Every adult educator-to-be needs to go deeper in assumptions about learning situations which are transferred to them. They may make their own judgements and investigate what underlies their own assumptions.

In his book, *Becoming a critically reflective teacher,* Brookfield provided the example for what he referred to as "a mistake":

> *What we think are democratic, respectful ways of treating people can be experienced by them as oppressive and constraining. One of the hardest things teachers have to learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice. The cultural, psychological, and political complexities of learning and the ways in which power complicates all human relationships (including those between students and teachers) mean that teachers can never be innocent* (1995:1).

The way in which Brookfield used the word "innocent" denotes the erroneousness in one always thinking that one knows exactly what he/she is doing and what effect actions have; indeed, this is a sign of naiveté. But as adult educators, we also often feel guilt and blame ourselves because we think that whatever went wrong is a show of our incompetence. As Brookfield argued, one needs to break down the circle of innocence and blame. This is one of the reasons why one needs critical reflection.

Brookfield also made the distinction between reflection and critical reflection. Reflection is, when one asks oneself if anything could be 'otherwise'. But one needs a good adult educator to know about and use critical reflection. What then, is critical reflection?

5.2. Critical reflection

To briefly answer what critical reflection is, Brookfield proposed that first one has to:

> (…) *understand how considerations of power undergird, frame and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests* (1995:8).

As adult educators, we must be aware that the classroom isn't neutral or even benevolent. We must also be aware that power over learners can become power *with* the learners.

Some adult educators can believe that they are committed to working democratically and consider themselves as equal to the learners. They perhaps tell the learners that they are exactly alike – but then these educators may underestimate the role played by cultural habits, which are difficult to come 'undone'; hence, they may still be perceived by the learners as uneven. Some educators – due to cultural habits or other factors – may experience rejection by the learners, though what they would really need is authentic collaboration. As a result, time must be spent on earning the learners' trust by acting respectfully towards them. In doing so, adult educators become aware of the power. An educator can't be a 'fly on the wall', though some educators teach as if they were: they would like to be non-directed facilitators of learning and perhaps put students into groups and provide minimal instructions. As an educator, one cannot be an observer, as understood in an ordinary way, as Brookfield elaborated on:

> *Critically reflective teachers will make sure that they find some way of regularly seeing what they do through student' eyes. As a result of learning about the different ways in which students view the teacher's silence, they will be in a much better position to make sure that their fly-on-the-wall presence has the helpful consequences they seek* (ibid.:12).

The second purpose of critical reflection is to enable the recognition of hegemonic assumptions. Hegemonic assumptions are what one thinks is in one's best interest; however, it may be uncovered that whatever is at hand has been designed by someone or an entity that is more powerful than oneself. In turn, these may work against the individual in the long-term.

Brookfield provided some examples:

1) Many educators take pride in their knowledge and want to be good at what they do, and as a result, they carry out evaluations regarding their teaching. However, an educator may assume the worst if outcomes of

this evaluation are less than perfect. But the critically reflective educator recognises that a good teacher does not always yield perfect student evaluations. They are aware that among the students there are different personalities, learning styles, and ideological orientations.

2) When experiencing problems of practice, many educators turn to workshops or a person to solve their problems, or they look into a manual. Although these can be useful, Brookfield maintained that it must occur to us, that our problems cannot always be solved outside our experience. Critically reflective educators are aware that there is never a standardised solution for difficult problems. They will also know that a starting point could be in analysing their own past experiences; hence, autobiographies can be a powerful source of knowledge to solve problems.
3) 'Meeting needs' of the learners is alive and many educators will say that their best classes are where their learners' needs are met. The underlying assumption to this is that educators who meet learners' needs will not feel incompetent. But critically reflective educators know that this approach may ignore pedagogic reality and significant learning that encompass ambivalent feelings and emotions.

It is clear why Brookfield emphasised that, as adult educators, we *need* critical reflection. He wrote that critical reflection is necessary when adult educators talk about the pedagogical practice or give reasons to improve education. And certainly, critical reflection is needed when adult educators improve and promote critical reflective processes among students.

5.3. How can we as adult educators promote reflection and critical reflection?

It is well known that adult educators consider learners' different experiences and use such experiences in their teachings. However, it may also be the case that although learners' experiences are connected to the teaching, sometimes in the classroom, there is lack of time, and it means that highlighting the experiences is 'forgotten' by the adult educator. They thus spend classroom time teaching their own material.

The use of reflection and critical reflection is indispensable for learners in learning situations, but they take time and need to be framed and supported by an adult educator. It would be misleading if adult educators expected reflection and critical reflection to simply 'take place'. This is why it is the educator who must plan for and formulate the intention towards reflection and critical reflection.

When an adult educator organises reflection and critical reflection in a learning situation, he/she has a very good opportunity to connect the learners' experiences and the work which is built into reflection: what Brookfield named "hunting assumptions".

The purpose of reflection and critical reflection is to qualify knowledge, a situation or a problem. The reflections seek to create new knowledge and learning through linking the learners' past experiences and assumptions to new or changed understandings and ideas for the future.

In practice, an adult educator must ask questions such as: "What thoughts do you get?", "When you hear this story, which picture comes to your mind?", "Why do you ask?", "How did you come to that answer?", "What do you think you can use this knowledge for?", "What did you find most interesting in the teaching today?", "What is new to you in this knowledge (connected to your practice)?", "Does it give you any meaning?". Such questions invite the learners to be reflective and participate in learning situations. As adult educators, we are responsible for the process of critical reflection.

Chapter 6: Why does Europe (still) need adult educators?

By Andrea Ciantar

One of the main pillars and foundations of every society, as we well know, is education. We know this from history and anthropology, both of which precede the pedagogical sciences. The recent history of Europe itself shows us – in the events that have characterised it both positively and negatively – to what extent the education of children and adults is an essential factor in the transformation of society.

The different types of totalitarianism that have left their mark on Europe – above all Fascism, Nazism, the Soviet regime and others still which, let us not forget, lasted until recent times (e.g. Franco's dictatorship in Spain which lasted until the 1970s…) – took particular care in organising their educational systems both in terms of modality and content, in order to ensure support of the underlying ideologies. There are some periods in European history which have shown us the negative power of education, with the hundreds of thousands of young men who went boldly and enthusiastically to war, towards death, in the belief that they were doing something that was meritorious and just.

On the flip side, how can we fail to see the connection between the achievements of democracy and the increasing consciousness arising in the social fabric of Europe and its people, or the connection between post-war economic development and the processes of education both of children and adults (we refer here to the great literacy campaigns), and of vocational training?

Finally, the turn to neoliberal policies occurring in many European states since the 1980s has not been without repercussions on educational systems, which have been increasingly linked more to the needs of the systems of productivity. In many cases too, public funding for the educational sector has been reduced within the general framework of downsizing the welfare state.

The story – or rather the stories – of education in Europe, of which adult education is an important part, is thus a complex reality, which has changed over time, and which has been an indispensable part of the civil and social evolution of Europe itself. It is a story that contains within it many achievements, both in theory and practice, achievements that we must not forget.

The traces of this story are to be found also in the material published in this Handbook, the result of the BAEA project. The questions running through the different papers – and which the institutions and people participating in the project tried to come to grips with – have to do with issues transversal to the

different countries and contexts that make up the European scenario. These include questions such as:

- What is the meaning of adult education today?
- What is the role and function of the adult educator?
- Does adult education still have its own specificity?
- What are the most useful training and career paths to those who wish to become adult educators today?
- What are the possible recommendations – in terms of practice and policies – that can be made today to practitioners in the field and above all to political decision-makers?

It will help us to focus on these elements as 'fixed points' for a point of departure.

6.1. A changing society

Those who deal with adult education today cannot ignore the consideration that we live in a society characterised by change – increasingly rapid and often unexpected – in virtually all spheres of life. From the business sector to the sphere of family relationships, consumption, opportunities offered by technology, the increasing complexity demands not only more and more knowledge, but also – we might say – 'second level' knowledge: the capacity to interpret contexts and to 'change the context', to change one's plans, and to learn to learn.

This acquires even more significance in the face of the current economic crisis. The current situation makes it necessary for young adults entering the workforce to acquire greater knowledge and skills, but it is also an invitation to reflect on the inadequate (and unfair) mechanisms of the prevailing economic system. At the same time, for the category of adults aged between 40 and 50 years who have lost their jobs, the need to adapt to the changing times takes on even more vital importance.

6.2. Increasing numbers of informal 'educational agencies'

In this increasingly complex situation, we see a kaleidoscope of educational opportunities unfold, above all at the informal level. In addition to the traditional educational agencies, which in different ways seek to adapt to new realities, the individual finds him/herself before an ever larger range of opportunities, offered by the spread of technology (we are thinking here of the Internet), by the world

of information and the media, as well as non-profit organisations, which pose many questions to those who are involved in adult education: for example, the issue of recognition of skills and competences which have been acquired in non-formal ways; and above all, the question of how to help the individual to make sense of this tangle of available information.

6.3. Towards a multicultural society

European society is becoming increasingly multicultural. That beliefs, social behaviour, values and customs inherited from the past are static and self-evident is being constantly called into question by the encounter with diversity. A multicultural society asks adults to make a leap of the imagination; it asks for greater ability to recognise, understand and interpret cultural contexts. This is an issue which deeply concerns identity. Identity – be it of the migrant or the individual who welcomes him or her – reveals itself to be a 'process of change' more than a reassuring and stable certainty. Adult education thus has the difficult task of educating the adult to question his/her own premises and if necessary to change them. The dangers of this not happening include racism and xenophobia, and the resurfacing of these phenomena in Europe today says a great deal about how we have failed to devote proper attention to such issues.

6.4. Adult education as a factor of citizenship

Almost all the authors dealing with adults undergoing education and training today include active and conscious citizenship among the priorities in educational objectives. Within this perspective, the adult is seen as being closely connected with his/her environment; he/she is at the same time a product of his/her environment and an agent of change, creating opportunities through which society can improve and evolve.

In this perspective, there is something more than a vain wish or hope. If, in fact, education is the art of change, it would be reductive to conceive a path of personal development without acting upon the general conditions that affect an individual's life, above all if we are considering the long term.

At the same time, on the individual plane, in caring for the human being as a 'social being', adult education demonstrates its ability to concern itself with all aspects of the individual. Explicitly or implicitly, this perspective holds that an adult who is deprived of the skills and knowledge needed to understand the (increasingly global) world in which he/she lives and of the possibility to reflect on and develop his/her own civic and moral sense, is a person who will have fewer possibilities to defend him/herself and to have an active role in society.

Explicitly or implicitly, this perspective holds that an adult deprived of the possibility to desire a world that is less unjust and to make a contribution – of any kind – to lead it in that direction, is a less responsible – and less happy – person.

6.5. The need for awareness of implicit processes

Another element which characterises current approaches to adult education concerns the need for adult education to help the individual become aware of the implicit processes which – for better or for worse – affect the life of the individual and of society as a whole[7]. Here too, the greater complexity and speed of change in society obviously make this function even more important.

We are referring here to industrial processes and the world of work: often the individual is part of complex systems whose exact nature or final result he/she is unaware of. This brings about a mechanical and impersonal dimension to work, the antechamber to alienation. The primary significance of work is lost: work as an act of transformation where the individual applies his/her creativity and thus can experience a sense of satisfaction and the pleasure of having created something – be it material or immaterial – which is the result of his/her effort and ingenuity and is something useful to him/herself and to others. The implicit assumptions at the base of this way of producing and working are rarely examined and called into question at the individual or collective level, even though they affect the lives of a great many people.

Once a person leaves the workplace (where a large percentage of one's existence is spent), he/she takes on other roles: for example, that of the consumer. How many of our needs – things that seem to us we cannot do without – are in fact induced? The advertising and marketing systems, in which businesses invest huge resources, are capable of creating desires and implicit models of behaviour that go to the extent of involving the body, so that for example, conditions which are often simply a part of the life cycle become pathologies. And all this is done for the sole purpose of fuelling the medicine market.

What are the implicit processes through which we define our identities as men or women? How do we define our different social roles (for example, of husband or wife, child or parent, the follower of a credo or religion, etc.)? How much of what is 'implicit' or 'not said' is included in our daily actions? What before was passed down from generation to generation, simply through imitation, today becomes inadequate within a short time. But it is very difficult to call the premises, the behavioural models into question – precisely because they

[7] See chapter 5: "To promote critical reflection among adult learners"

are implicit – and to develop new ones, especially within a shared social environment.

Finally, even not wishing to involve these more social and structural aspects of individual existence, there are still many other implicit aspects which adult learning processes demand to be brought to a level of awareness. An adult who goes back to school, perhaps after some kind of experience of failure, will have many implicit factors to draw out and take to pieces (he/she may for example have a deep feeling of not being up to the mark). The desire for learning may on the other hand be considered illegitimate or 'non-functional' (this may be the case of a person, for example, who has not been able to follow a particular interest during his/her school years and might now consider it useless and non-functional to do so in adulthood).

All of adult education – from the investigation of an individual's initial motivation, to the attempt to draw out prior skills, the work of developing a personal and meaningful relationship with specific subjects being studied, the observation of how one's mind and capacity for learning functions – is ultimately the 'emergence of the implicit'.

6.6. Recognition of the relevance of informal education processes

The entire situation outlined so far leads finally to another transversal need closely connected to the different aspects we have discussed. Just as the individual is engaged at different levels and in different roles/situations of life, in the same way, in each of these situations he/she is offered an opportunity to learn. Thus there will be different situations which will offer an opportunity for learning either in an intentional and organised manner or occasionally and by chance.

In addition to the specific educational programmes (always under the classic distinctions of general, continuous and liberal education), practitioners and institutions involved in adult education will thus have the difficult task of helping people to become aware of what they have learned in their experiences on the job, within the family, in their social commitment, as well as in the guise of reader, individual with hobbies and passions, or traveller. Or again, they will seek to facilitate exploration of how certain experiences and life situations may have been for the individual sources of learning and creation of values and beliefs: love, friendship, an illness, the birth of a child, significant encounters; and how all this can – at times – become learning that is recognised and useful for practical purposes on the formal level as well, and a further challenges.

One question remains: what recommendations can emerge on the general level of training adult educators, as well as on the plane of conceptual mapping, methodology and practice and policies?

On the epistemological level, we have seen some important transversal aspects for bringing adult education into line with the complexity of society.

On the methodological level, even before considering specific methodologies (with which this Handbook also deals), we have illustrated general approaches useful for thinking about or organising educational programmes for adults in the different stages and times at which they are defined[8].

With regard to practices and policies, three basic recommendations emerge:

1) With regard to **training programmes for future adult educators**, it is important that the curricula include – along with more 'traditional' content – aspects like those described above: attention to the social dimension and citizenship, awareness of implicit processes and the importance of informal educational paths. Deepening these aspects can be facilitated by fostering learning through practice and by means of concrete encounters with adults in training in the different stages and contexts where the elements cited can be found (orientation, specific study programmes and in the different milieus – general, professional training and liberal education). At the same time, methodological education and training is also of vital importance. It is not enough, in fact, to know 'what', but also 'how' – thus, 'know-how' which would attain to creating and managing occasions and situations where concrete and effective tools are used to work in the directions underlined above: drawing out the implicit, motivation, development of critical knowledge and a personal rapport with the specific subjects studied.
2) With regard to **practices**, we would like to emphasise the importance for educators to seek occasions for exchange, sharing and common reflection at local, national and European levels. As already indicated, it is worthwhile noting that on the level of conceptual mapping and experiences, there is in fact a significant level of agreement among scholars of adult education in Europe. In the same way, common elements also emerge among practitioners, as demonstrated by the study done within the BAEA project[9]. These common elements include awareness of the fact that adult educators carry out an important function and that they feel great commitment to their work and thus there is a need to affirm its social importance in the face of a lack of adequate definition and social recognition.

[8] Particular reference to the chapters: "The adult educator's competency", "The relationship between the adult educator and adult learners".

[9] In this volume, chapter 1: "The adult educator's different roles"; see also other documented results of the BAEA project, such as the Delphi Report, National Reports and the Synthesis Research Report.

3) With regard to **policies** it is important to demand that public policies allocate more resources to adult education, which is almost always treated rather meanly, both at national and European levels[10], with a view also to increasing opportunities for training adult educators (or future adult educators) and for encounters and exchanges at the European level[11].

[10] This is a need recognised by the European Commission, referenced in a variety of their documents, including "*Communication form the Commission – Adult learning: It is never too late to learn*", which states: "Education and training are critical factors for achieving the Lisbon's strategy objectives of raising economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion. The role of adult learning in this context, in addition to its contribution to personal development and fulfilment, is increasingly recognised in Members States' National Reform Programmes. However, with some exceptions, implementation remains weak. Most education and training systems are still largely focused on the education and training of young people and limited progress has been made in changing systems to mirror the need for learning throughout the lifespan. An additional 4 million adults would need to participate in lifelong learning in order to achieve the participation rate of the benchmark agreed by Member States in the framework of the "Education and Training 2010" process" (EC, 2006).

Similar views are expressed in the document "*Education and training 2010: The success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms*", a joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe, which states: "1.3.5. Too few adults participating in lifelong learning. In a knowledge-based society, people must continue to update and improve their competences and qualifications, and make use of the widest possible range of learning settings. An analysis of the national contributions received in follow-up to the Council Resolution on lifelong learning (33) corroborates the progress and the shortcomings already observed in the context of the analysis of the national action plans for employment (34) and in the recent report of the Employment Task Force. In many countries certain links of the lifelong learning chain are insufficiently developed (35). The shortcomings to be addressed frequently stem from a vision overly concerned with the requirements of employability or an over-exclusive emphasis on rescuing those who slipped through the net of initial education. This is perfectly justifiable but does not on its own constitute a lifelong learning strategy which is genuinely integrated, coherent and accessible to everyone. The objective of achieving a 12.5% rate of adult participation in further education and training calls for special attention in most (current and future) Member States. The rate of participation in 2002 has been estimated at 8.5% in the EU, i.e. a mere 0.1% higher than in 2001, and at only 5% in the acceding countries. What is more, that figure, which had been steadily rising since the mid-1990s, has been stable over the last years" (Council of the European Union, 2004).

[11] Training for adult educators does not seem to be on the agenda of many countries and is not frequently mentioned in European Commission documents. It is often included in more general recommendations with respect to the teaching profession. For example, in the above-mentioned "*Education and training 2010: The success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms*", we find: "2.1.2. Make the profession of teacher/trainer more attractive. The success of the reforms undertaken hinges directly on the motivation and the quality of education and training staff. Member States should therefore, where necessary, and in accordance with national legislation and practices, implement measures to make the teacher/trainer profession more attractive. This includes steps to attract the best talents to the profession and to retain them, including through attractive working conditions and adequate career structure and development. They must also be prepared for their changing roles in the knowledge-based

Europe has a tradition of adult educators which has left its mark; today too, the great many educators who in the different European countries work each day with extraordinary passion and commitment can be an important factor for change both for the individual and for society as a whole.

society and in transforming the education and training systems. In particular, Member States should, according to national legislation and practices, further consolidate continuing training for educational staff to enable them to meet these challenges" (EC, 2006).

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To be an adult educator is a challenge that entails special knowledge, skills and attitudes; it requires passion and patience. Likewise, learning involves cooperation between educators and learners. How can one be a good adult educator? This Handbook addresses the question drawing upon prior knowledge and experience brought into the project Becoming Adult Educators in the European Area (BAEA) by its partners as well as new knowledge and experience gained through the realisation of the project. It addresses, in particular, prospective adult educators willing to learn more about some of the features that characterise this profession and the implications of working with adults. The Handbook, however, is also meant for those who already act as adult educators and seek new ideas to improve current work practices and future professional development.

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