Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić, Cristina C. Vieira (Eds.)

Navigating through Contemporary World with Adult Education Research and Practice

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NAVIGATING THROUGH CONTEMPORARY WORLD
WITH ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION: CONTEMPORARY WORLD AND ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

The book *Navigating through Contemporary World with Adult Education Research and Practice* is an assembly of different topics, reflections, novel theoretical analyses and examples of good practices, hopes and worries of a number of researchers and adult educators from various countries and continents. It represents the combined effort to respond and navigate through accelerating growth of research and practice areas of adult education reflecting different contexts, opportunities and challenges present in our contemporary realities. The diversity of theoretical as well as practice related approaches and perspectives encompassed in the chapters of the book emphasize the long way contemporary adult learning and education has come. From the negation and resistance to its establishment as a separate academic discipline, through those understandings that categorized it merely as a method of teaching for adults, to current growing plurality of paradigms and concepts exploring learning in almost every aspect of adult life — today we are contemplating and implementing not only what adult learning is and should be, but also what it could become for individuals, groups and larger communities in the long run.

While some of the adult education research and practices nowadays are more inclined to the ideas of neoliberalism, other point to a welfare state as a framework for the adult education model that has a more holistic and human-centered approach. However, it is not the case of "either-or". There is a substantial body of work representing growing responses to the current situation marked by the rise of neoliberal thinking and weakening of the welfare state, and it is situated between those traditions. Such research and practices of adult education and learning promote novel and creative ways of approaching adult education and learning based on self-organizing, community learning and collaboration. They are clearly overcoming the impression that there is nothing there between social justice and

privatization of adult education and, therefore, opening and exploring new possibilities to create, organize and research education and learning of adults.

Crises and technology — Navigating through the future

Joint effort to understand current challenges in different fields of adult education and learning may be seen as an attempt to react to the *synergy of crises* we are facing. Present student debts and potential very near loss of many professions, especially related to tertiary sector, will most likely and very soon, become the next crisis to hit higher education and its traditional role. In several years to come, we might be witnessing the rise of a "global useless class", i.e., massive job and occupation losses affecting hundreds of millions of individuals as a result of recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI) and automation (Harari, 2020, 00:01:03–00:01:15). The marriage of recent revolutions in digital and biomedical sciences may give new opportunities for abundant and prolonged life for some, leaving many behind the scientific and technological leap forward. New social stratifications and class divisions seem to be certain if not addressed in time.

At the same time, Steven Pinker argues, data give an optimistic picture of the fruits the social and technological progress brought over time. Among other data, Pinker notes that: average life expectancy rose constantly worldwide from around 30 years in the second half of the 18th century to more than 70 years in 2015; child mortality until 5 years of age dramatically decreased from 1/3 in the richest countries about two hundred fifty years ago, to about less than 6% in the poorest countries nowadays; in 1820, 90% of the global population lived in extreme poverty, while in 2015 less than 10% was extremely poor; the annual war/battle caused deaths dropped from 22 per 100 000 per year in the 1950s to 1.2 per 100 000 per year in 2015; from different periods of the 20th century until 2015, mortality due to road accidents, airplane crashes, natural accidents and disasters (lightening strikes, floods, earthquakes, volcano eruptions etc.) and job injuries decreased to a large extent, to become 88%–99% less likely to occur; in the 19th century people of Western Europe and the USA worked for more than 60 hours per week, compared to about less than 40 hours per week in 2015; and in the 86% of countries of the world happiness increased over the several past decades (Pinker, 2018a, 00:04:44–00:08:44; Pinker, 2018b); in 1940 less than 5% of Americans had completed academic undergraduate studies (BA), while by the end of 2015 almost a third of Americans held a BA degree (Pinker, 2018b).

May it be that the progress we are experiencing is clouded by a worrisome portrait depicted by the media and contemporary culture *weltanschauung*? Although humanity advanced extraordinarily in many respects and quality of life improved at an unprecedented rate during the past several centuries and decades, one has to take into account that this progress has its downfalls and potential risks that have to be addressed in order to find proper orientation in the

general dizziness created by technological jumps and economical changes. From 2008 to 2018, anxiety was estimated to have significantly increased in the USA (from 5.12% to 6.68%), while in the sample subsection of individuals between 18–25 years of age there was a significant increase, almost doubling in size (from 07.97% to 14.66%). Also, the prevalence was the highest in the lowest income group in comparison to all other income groups and in those with some college education compared to all other education levels (Goodwin, Weinberger, Kim, Wu, & Galea, 2020, p. 443). A systematic review of depressive disorders prevalence among university students showed that 30.6% of students were affected by some form of depression, which is quite higher than in the general population (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013, p. 397).

In 2020, student debt in the USA reached $1.56 trillion (Friedman, 2020), and about 16.6% of USA citizens have debt regarding federal student loans (Lombardo, 2019). Higher education fees in the UK led to a number of negative outcomes already by early 2000s (Metcalf, 2005), such as an increase in debt and a decrease in students' satisfaction. In Canada, high student debts led to recent graduates' dissatisfactions in terms of employment, while first-generation graduates with high debts experienced less job benefits, lower incomes (even three years upon completion of higher education) and potential regrets about the choice of education they made (McIvor, 2018). In spite of the views that student debt is a useful type of debt, as for being an investment in human capital (Baum, 2016, as cited in Nissen, Hayward & McManus, 2019) and that higher education participation was rising since the early 2000s in many developed countries such as the UK, there is evidence that lower-income class students show more "debt-averse attitudes" than upper-income class students in England, in 2015, and much more than they did in 2002 (Callender & Mason, 2017, p. 41).

Since the 19th century until the present date, adult education rose to become more than a method, organization and providing chances for adults to learn. Maybe more than anything, it acts as a diverse social movement advocating for fairness, equity of chances and social engagement, especially for less privileged social classes. Data regarding student debt seems to show, quite intuitively, that the most affected with the debt crisis are the ones lacking in life opportunities. Can we expect similar data, showing vulnerability of lower-income class adult learners, once the increased digitalization and automation make many current jobs obsolete? How do we need to conceptualize the role of adult education if/ when these events take place? In the future, many jobs and professions may need to be thoroughly reinvented. This means an individual may need not to just increase the existing base of knowledge and skills, but to change the base itself, thoroughly transforming it, to learn new skills from the scratch (Harari, 2018). Would compensatory short-term adult education programs be enough to accommodate for these needs? New systemic solutions with greater involvement of governments and societies will probably be necessary — a reinvention of the education system as a whole may be needed. Non-formal and online educa-

tion (which to a large extent still act as compensatory agents to the formal system) offering new and advanced skills are often expensive and time-consuming, reachable only to the ones who already possess high learning independence, self-direction and adequate wealth. A recent research investigating participation in massive open online courses (MOOC) in statistics and chemistry found around 40% of respondents experience participation barriers related to lack of resources and finances (Shapiro, Lee, Roth, Çetinkaya-Runde & Canelas, 2017). It would be interesting to know how many of those who are in conscious need for participation in these courses experience financial barriers or more systemic barriers related to wider social exclusion for a number of possible reasons.

As increasingly developing AI becomes part of everyday life and human experience, creating new educational needs, both higher education and adult education in general will need to undergo significant changes. All fourth industrial revolution technologies, including AI, will put more focus on adaptability, self-directed learning and thinking as the top needed qualities (Penprase, 2018). More than creating and offering compensatory programs, adult education may be progressively needed in providing learning-how-to-learn skills, fostering self-directiveness, offering support in increasing learning adaptability and development of critical thinking. The teacher role, in general, may likely go through transformation, with more activities of providing motivational and emotional support to adult learners, as well as making the instruction process more strategic and less didactic in terms of planning and designing of learning. Moreover, the role of the teacher in formal education may come to be closer to the concept and current role of the adult educator or facilitator. Intelligent software will be (is) able to create individual tailor-made programs, time adaptable as the learning process unfolds, adjusting the learning external and intrinsic cognitive loads to learners' individual cognitive capacities, as well as to prior knowledge networks. AI provided assessment and evaluation may evolve to constantly monitor learners' knowledge network structuration, adapting the program algorithms to resolve issues in individuals' knowledge base misconceptions or gaps. In other words, intelligent software will be able to learn about the learner, constantly accommodating to individual learners' needs. Aside from the obvious increasing dependence of human learners on intelligent software, AI and machine learning will influence individual learners in manners one can still not fully comprehend. It is probable that human cognition will adapt to become more focused on augmented reality and a new system of symbols will emerge from the evolution of software-human interaction.

It seems that in each possible scenario of further progress, lifelong learning will need to rise to become the central cohesive point of the whole education system, which was its desired purpose from the very beginning. The qualities that for decades were the focus of adult education and learning, such as decentralization, independence from the authority, *deformalization* of learning, self-direction and adaptability, may become principles to be infused by the entire system of education in an emerging sci-tech dominated society. This is of course also the question

of values *per se*. One could also ask the question whether embracing these values will be enough and adequate *for all* in the fourth industrial revolution. What about social inclusion, equity of chances and critical aspects of thinking and social activism? Especially in the 20th century, adult education also functioned as a value regulator of societies pointing out to social injustice and creating *alternative learning for communities* and *alternative communities based on learning*. What if the current stampede of technological progress starts to distort a concept of lifelong learning into a lifelong race of obsessive learning of new skills needed for uncritical compulsive customization of human condition to evolving technologies? It is not just the question of who will be excluded from this accelerating marathon but also an issue of how will it affect the wellbeing of the ones who manage to keep the pace. Adult learning and education, more than ever, may be called to action to prevent its learning principles from being hacked by the increasingly techno-driven reality in a way they become contrasted to its core values.

Adult education and learning between neoliberalism and the welfare state

Modernity has left us with a legacy of the two dominant lines of thinking that have both proved utopian in relation to predicting the future we live today. On the one hand, liberal thought positioned that a fair and prosperous society would come along with the progress. On the other hand, critical theory, which recognized a certain amount of repression of the new society in the making, was counting on the material and psychological affordances to provide social stability (De Lissovoy, 2015). Despite these expectations, contemporary capitalism found its way to infiltrate in all aspects of social life, depriving people of any reassurance against powerlessness within the system, taking on different forms: social inequalities, insecurity of employment, declining incomes, increasing poverty and social instability, leaving more and more people on the margins of society. De Lissovoy marks neoliberalism to be the major factor of such tendencies or, in his words, "the principal contemporary agent of these predatory impulses" (2015, p. 1). As an ideology that supports the idea of a free market at the expense of government control, it promoted many ambiguities in all areas of social life, and produced many contradictions in today's world.

What marks neoliberal systems most is heightened individualism registered in terms of individual freedoms of autonomy and choice. Moreover, this position overcomes liberal values of self-reliance, autonomy and independence as necessary conditions for one's self-esteem and, rather, promotes the entrepreneurial side of a subject. Explaining neoliberal position, in that sense, Davis and Bansel (2007) claim that one can achieve freedom through continuous self-improvement through individual entrepreneurial activity. Thus, a central element of neoliberalism is *responsibilization* (Fernado, King & Kunkel, 2020, p. 191) — the

premise that every individual is responsible for her/his faith. Those who do not succeed in this competitive arena are marked as an economic liability.

Neoliberal focus on the interests of an individual has inevitable consequences in promoting disregard for public welfare. Moreover, as Davies and Bensel (2007) argue, the "social" and the "economic" in neoliberal discourse represent binary opposites, and the "social" does not comply with what is seen as the good economy. The neoliberal views impose an idea that the state should have a limited regulatory role and the private sector can provide the majority of services for its citizens. This shift put the welfare state in crisis, with the consequence of marginalizing those who cannot comply with the harsh rules of competition. Therefore, by taking the position that there is no alternative to free market-driven economic growth, neoliberal ideology is inevitably marked by insecurity and isolation. "As the economy preoccupies public debate, it leaves little room to speak of injustice, social transformation and other areas that support democratic visions" (Fleming, 2010, p. 16). In that sense, Harvey (2005, p.16, as cited in Fleming, 2010) concludes that it appears that "inequalities are structural to the neoliberal agenda".

The discourses and practices of neoliberalism have found their way into the field of adult education. They established themselves in the form of educational policy, financing and funding regimes, debates on standards, and ongoing educational reform to make education more market responsive. The neoliberal position is that economic productivity does not come from government investing in education, but education being a product on a free market to be bought and sold (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Therefore, neoliberal policies support adult education with the focus on marketable skills. In its efforts to adjust to the demands of the market and contribute to the increase of productivity, the welfare state put an emphasis on creating a skillful workforce, on the account of other areas of adult education. Anything that cannot be bought or sold is devalued or seen as unimportant, and that is why and how the majority of adult education and learning is left out of funding (Fleming, 2010). The main aim is to produce a new subject appropriate to neoliberal economy (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Participants of adult education are seen as consumers or customers, while educational institutions are viewed as providers of goods to be bought, that have market value and are described in economic terms.

Accordingly, in the neoliberal view, learning is an individual enterprise and responsibility. Adult education met the needs of producing these highly individualized and *responsibilized* subjects allowing them to become "entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives" (Brown, 2003, p. 38, as cited in Davies & Bansel, 2007). Fleming (2010) argues that this is also being promoted through the concept of lifelong learning, which has become a link between the economy and adult education. In his opinion, this concept "connects the traditional field of adult education [...] with the political and economic interest in training adults for the global economy" (para. 2). He points out that, somehow, we accepted the belief that the economy would not develop unless we are all learning.

Such focus on producing degrees, on practice, and on professional training inevitably reduces the opportunities to connect learning with society (Taber, 2014). As the welfare state is no longer responsible for providing all society's needs for support, individuals and groups are left to themselves and responsible for their well-being (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Adult education is subject to cuts in social programs and funding as part of a "necessary" austerity agenda, which additionally marginalizes adult learners. Consequently, adult education in the neoliberal terms deepens inequalities, powerlessness, austerity, and social and ecological crisis. "This highly utilitarian and intensely ideological approach to education impoverishes our capacity to discuss the complex and multidimensional nature of learning and offers no language for exploring how education might be used to create higher levels of social equality" (Finnegan, 2016, p. 49).

It can be argued that, being primarily focused on the capitalist marketplace rather than on democratic values, mainstream adult education is supporting and reproducing the dominant culture. Following the neoliberal agenda, it reaffirms the status quo in today's society, rather than providing the basis to allow engaging in critical inquiry processes (Taber, 2014). Inevitably, adult education needs to play a part in some kind of social reconstruction with critical and equity-oriented programs, with an aim at bringing social transformation. De Lissovoy argues that the current situation can be described as the "state of generalized social emergency" (2015, p. 7). To address this situation, he proposes that what is needed is a creative project of fundamental transformation, in which education undoubtedly has an important role. In his view, education should be seen as a resource in the continuing struggle for social transformation.

In that sense, Taber argues that while the majority of government leaders and adult education administrators embrace neoliberal ideology and its various forms, these "are also being contested by scholars concerned with social justice" (2014, p. 16). According to Davis and Bansel (2007), adult educators who believe that education should play a role in ameliorating poverty and other societal ills should be encouraged to take on critical perspectives on the relationship between adult education and societal inequities. This perspective should come from a moral commitment to correcting those inequities through the educational efforts and learning activities in adulthood. Should adult education transform the culture, it needs to transform itself and propose new andragogical principles in response to neoliberal views and promote the belief that it can act as a transformative agent that can affect social change.

We argue that currently, adult education is at a crossroads consisting of, at least, two major paths. One is embedded in the neoliberal logic of late capitalism, promoting the idea of global economic growth, while the other relies on practicing critical praxis that focuses on a societal critique. Navigating through future research and practice in adult education is yet to be seen which path will prove to be more promising. Possible alternative to this is, of course, that the field takes on both paths (in a way that it builds on a critique, rather than it acts

in a dismissive manner) and instead of taking a dualistic position, interchange-ably produces new forms and tools for creating the new world for us to live in. In both cases, it will be interesting to witness the major paradigmatic and discur-sive shift that adult education and learning needs to undertake in its efforts to become the social change wheel for the future world.

Navigating towards the future of adult education research and practice with a cause: To leave no one behind

Throughout this book it will be possible to understand how fortunately di-verse is the field of adult education practices and the correspondent research themes. Despite the contexts of learning, the contents to be learned and the theoretical approaches that are pursued by the educators, andragogists, re-searchers and other types of professionals in adult education, the focus is un-doubtedly placed on the learner with his/her idiosyncrasies. Respecting its core traditional principles, across the years adult education has been trying to combat the concern expressed in the title of the influential book of Malcom Knowles (1973), which evidenced his conviction that the adult learner at that time was a neglected species. This was in fact the conclusion of a recent Delphi study with 14 Portuguese specialists in adult education practice (with more than 20 years of professional experience in average), which expressed their views about the key-competences, knowledges, and attitudes that adult educators should mobilize to perform efficiently their different roles: all the participants expressed opinions that demarcated them "from the myopia of technical rationality, pointing to theoretical support for the knowledge and skills of the adult educator into the humanistic, reflective and critical frameworks" (Lima & Amaral, 2019, p. 18).

Aligned with the view of adults as potential *organic intellectuals*,[1] the main aim of critical education of adults should be to support "the organisation of peo-ple's everyday life as a source of knowledge and recognising it as educationally and developmentally important" (Ostrouch-Kaminska & Vieira, 2016, p. 49). These means "to leave no one behind" in the trajectory of progress within de-mocracy, as it is the plan until 2030 of supranational political agreed decisions, as the *Sustainable Development Goals* (ODS) (UN, 2015), for example. But, as it was mentioned before, neoliberal policies rooted in capitalism rules that have assaulted adult education practices and research in current times seem to point in a different direction. Reading from the outside, it seems that there are a set of "allegedly good intention policy makers" that decide about rules and recommen-dations for a "fairy-tale world" that will never be possible.

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1   This idea was introduced by the Italian philosopher and activist Antonio Gramsci, that wrote from his cell in prison in the 1930s, in his *Prison Notebooks*, defending that people may be leaders in their social class (or may have an important role for the community to which they belong) using their internal resources and collective knowledge that should be mobilized to help to raise collective awareness for social transformation.

The emphasis on individuals' competencies for their potential mobility in the labor market, the renewed importance of meritocracy selection systems to advancement in society, and the insidious blaming of individuals for not being competent enough to face current challenges are undoubtedly letting a great majority of citizens excluded from public investment and many others completely ignored as human beings. Legal political deals — as the *Strategy of Lisbon* signed in 2000 for a period of ten years (Ivan-Ungureanu & Marcu, 2006) or *The New Competences Agenda for Europe* (EU, 2016),[2] just to quote two treaties — with the goal of reinforcing employability, continue to promote the financial support to increasing literacy rates and professional competencies of active population, ignoring the social relevance and importance of many other forms of adult education (Lima & Guimarães, 2018) and letting behind several marginalized groups. Repeatedly, some sets of the population are having a clearly marginal importance in the political agendas and governance priorities of the countries, as the seniors, migrants, adult people with disabilities or mental illness, among others. In fact, [...] neoliberal educational policy often pays lip-service to social justice through the discursive vehicle of 'social inclusion', [and] behind this promise of social mobility through educational attainment is a skills discourse that depends upon the objectification of students [adult learners] and their stratification [...]. (Smith & Duckworth, 2020, p. 490 in this book).

There are no abstract individuals and the structural inequalities that maintain discriminations and vulnerabilities cannot be solved with utopian laws. Systematic and societal changes are needed, involving different actors and acting by respecting an intersectional perspective, either in practice and in research, which has been of limited application in adult education (Merrill & Fejes, 2018). This means the recognition that some adults may suffer complex and interconnected forms of discrimination that prevent them from using the opportunities for learning and progressing in life that are potentially open to them. Ensuring *de jure* equality of opportunities to theoretically access new career opportunities, to develop new competencies for labor market and to increase the literacy levels, including digital ones, doesn't guarantee the effective enrollment of adults in such offers and, as a consequence, it doesn't mean *de facto* equality of opportunities for success. Several aspects may be pointed here for such a reflection, from the economic and familiar (familiar responsibilities of women in taking care of

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2   In June, 2020, it was published a reformulation of the European Skills Agenda, which pretends to foster sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. Among the different aims that the European Commission assumes as a priority to face the challenges and inequalities worsened by the pandemic crisis, there are goals related to nonformal education of adults and to learning through intergenerational, intercultural and communitarian processes. These include, for example, the increasing digital competences of the elders until 2025 and an investment in community learning centers for adults "where people of all ages can learn and exchange, building a resilient and cohesive society" (EU, 2020, p. 21). Apparently, this promise constitutes a step forward the previous limited upskilling pathways, designed mainly for active population, but only the future will show if the political intentions will be translated into more inclusive educational practices for all. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223.

younger and older generations) to geographic (accessibility to training centers; availability of public transportations; the uneven available resources in rural and urban areas), and cultural (traditional values that prevent married women to go to school; hegemonic masculinity standards that discourage men with low literacy levels from attending adult education and training courses).

The emphasis in the economy seems to somehow silence the intrinsic needs and interests of adults as learning subjects, as well as their prior learning experiences, denying the democratic-emancipatory tradition of adult education (Lima & Guimarães, 2018). People aren't mere objects that should be adapted (or "equipped") to respond to new requirements of the labor market without considering their propensity to enroll in opportunities of education and training. Such propensity may be affected by previous experiences as adult learners, by their self-concept as learners, by their stereotypes and main roles, by their values and goals in life, among other factors (Caffarella, 1994). Also, pioneer researchers in adult education claimed that adults learn best in contexts that are informal, comfortable, flexible and free from fear (Knowles, 1970).

Instead of being guided by the economy, or considering the difficult balance between economy and inner people's interests, the priorities of the public policies should be oriented towards building more inclusive, fair, egalitarian, democratic and participatory societies, in which the action of all social actors is a part of a cooperative process (Lima & Guimarães, 2018). In this sense, following the quoted authors, education is seen as a process of empowerment and a mechanism of social emancipation available for all human beings, rather than a tool to respond to economic demands of countries.

As Lima (2018) stated, adult education tradition can in fact "educate" the crisis, helping adult educators professionals to rediscover the trail that they had begun many years ago, and thus avoiding treating adults as mere pawns of the capitalist demands that have dominated the governance of the world. As it was mentioned before, due to the pandemic situation that we are facing nowadays, previous inequalities between people and groups are worsening and all the countries of the world are dealing with dramatic unforeseen and undesirable scenarios. Public policies are strong tools to manage the common good, whether they relate to the labor market or other social and political rights of people and groups, as their right to learn and to participate actively in society across the lifespan. For these reasons, the navigation towards the future should be a shared collective task, with the aim of leaving no one behind in the search for reaching a dignified life.

Organization of the book

This book, *Navigating through Contemporary World with Adult Education Research and Practice*, contains thirty-three chapters (besides this introductory chapter) clustered in eight sections according to the topics and fields of adult learning and education they are addressing.

In the first part of the chapter *Adult Education in Late Modernity: Research and Practice between Welfare State and Neoliberalism*, Steffi Robak discusses the effects of neo-liberalization in practice and in the science of adult and continuing education. In the second part, the author develops a cultural and educational science-based theorization of adult and continuing education in late modern times. Robak provides a broad conceptualization of adult education, broken down in a model consisting of five portals of education: culturality, emotional elasticity and stabilization, political participation, including analytical-reflective skills, employability and professionalism. At the same time, the author presents a perspective of a common transnational education and research space. The chapter ends with an introduction to research on programs in multi-perspective research approaches and its contribution to the analysis of lifelong learning.

In the chapter *Renewal from the Margins: Change-Oriented Adult Education in Do-It-Yourself Learning Spaces*, Ivan Kirchgaesser investigates a number of change-oriented, nonformal, non-vocational adult learning spaces that are rooted in personal values and a sense of meaning and purpose, and that are all developed and facilitated by individuals with a Do-It-Yourself spirit. The author argues that they redefine what learning can look like, what the desirable outcomes of that learning are, and what knowledge and capacities are needed in the world today. It is the author's belief that these efforts can set an example for the future and are well worth taking seriously when looking for signs of renewal in the adult education field under the pressures of neoliberalism.

Magali Balayn Lelong's chapter, *Value Formation, Value of Adult Education: Study of Emancipation and Authorization Processes in Adult Learning*, is a study aiming at shedding new light on the topic of the intrinsic value of higher education programs in lifelong learning. The study relies on the spectrum of concepts and paradigms — from the Hegelian and Habermasian understanding of emancipation, which the author relates to Mezirow's traditional notion of transformation, to Dewey's theory of values and Galvani's self-education kaïros. Participants, adults that enrolled in higher education programs after taking a professional break for that purpose, were able to determine their individual identity values and define new norms during the process, as well as extrapolate their here and now, a sort of *dasein* to a wider environment.

In the chapter *Apologies and Affronts: Decolonizing and Reconciling Memories from Canada's Indian Residential Schools*, Cindy Hanson promotes a strong reflection about social justice and the potential role of adult education in promoting the reconciliation process in Canada policies concerning settler-Indigenous issues. Her chapter is crossed by several concerns to which the author intends to respond: How can adult education be a catalyst for epistemic solidarity? How might this work build practices of reconciliation, solidarity and collective action? What indeed is the historical and social cost of not doing this work? Refusing the compensatory models of reconciliation that are based on the hegemonic role of the state, she proposes several possibilities of interactions and dialogue —

relational methodologies — that adults' educators might use to decolonizing, engaging and reconciling. In her opinion, adult education can play a crucial role in fighting colonialism heritage which is ingrained into the structures of power that operate daily in settler-colonial nations.

In the chapter *A Customized Social Contributory Policy Rationale for Learning of Older Adults*, Satya Brink fosters an intense discussion about the lack of opportunities for senior adults to learn after retirement, departing from an analysis of Canada's situation. She begins with a contestation of the negative effects of neoliberal policies on the chances that are offered to older adults to engage in learning activities, referring that there are no formal indicators available in Canada. Her proposal is directed to the need of offering customized answers to specific needs and interests of seniors in terms of learning after active life, and she argues that this is a critical issue because these citizens contribute enormously to the economy and now are being relatively forgotten by the state policies and priorities.

Lyn Tett is the author of the chapter *Policy and Pedagogy: Pushing Back Against Neoliberal Ideologies in Family Literacy Programmes*. Based on a research that was developed in Scotland related to family literacy projects, she first discusses how the dominant neoliberal discourse is affecting adult education policies and how these policies impact on pedagogy. Giving the example of big data approaches as PIACC and some theoretical roots as Human Capital Theory, she contests the use of metrics to assess the individuals´ competencies and their propensity to labor market requirements. After that, she demonstrates how the practitioners have been trying to resist to the limiting effects of such a discourse, by giving examples of the experiences shared by the six experts that were interviewed and the twenty-seven mothers with whom they have worked within the scope of three projects in communities with high levels of unemployment. The chapter ends by pointing out the importance of a learner-centered curriculum, both in terms of its effectiveness in developing learning and in terms of its contribution to promoting a more socially just form of education that leaves no one behind.

Deindustrialization, economic crises, job loss, inequality, oppression and educational marginalization is a topic Joe Forster's study *'Exit, Loyalty and Voice': The Experiences of Adult Learners in the Context of Deindustrialisation in County Durham, North East England*. The chapter depicts and analyzes two life stories of people who went through employability programs struggling with changes brought by the forces of economic transformation in the late 1970s. Interview excerpts and study results' analyses introduce an insight of how the lack of adequate education provision and constricting education to here and now economic shifts (may) affect communities and subjectivities in the long-term.

Rachel Bélisle and Évelyne Mottais's study, *Recognition of Prior Learning: Between Social Justice and Privatisation of Education*, focuses on exploring RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) services at the secondary level of vocational and general adult education. Basing their conceptual framework of educational access on Sen's capabilities approach, they tackle different conditions and barriers

to RPL processes. RPL is seen as an opportunity for adults to pursue what they would like to do and as a contribution to their empowerment in the current social context marked by neoliberal economies.

Vasiliki Karavakau, Anastasia Kefala and Theofanis Papastathis tackle the issue of the role of Higher Education in regard to lifelong learning and educating adults in the chapter *Reversing the Neoliberal Agenda in Times of Crises: Universities Educating Socially Vulnerable Adults*. Specifically, their aim is to challenge the extent to which higher education manages to respond successfully to the — as they state — call of the neoliberal *Zeitgeist* to serve the demands of lifelong learning. The agenda of Higher Education for lifelong learning programs addressed to the socially vulnerable should take account of an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the needs and interests of the vulnerable adults. Arguing that it is a duty of Higher Education, primarily to itself, to be something more than a reflection or response to the needs of economy and consumption, they conclude that its goals should be inspired by the broader educational philosophy of educational inclusion and social cohesion in order to make an attempt to reverse the neoliberal trend.

On the basis of the premise that many adults can experience a mental health crisis that affects their education and job access, Shanti Fernando, Alyson King and Kathryn Kunkel interviewed adults participating in four different Supported Education (SEd) programs run in psychiatric hospitals. In the chapter *"I Came from a Lifetime of Teachers Giving up on Me": Finding Motivation in a Canadian Supported Education Program during Neoliberal Times*, they highlight the voices of interviewed students to explore the role of motivation in educational goal achievement. Doing so, they use a theoretical framework of motivation theory informed by the neoliberal concept of sacrificial citizenship and the supported education model. The findings illustrate the importance of providing educational programming for adults who do not easily fit into the neoliberal model of work in order to empower them as advocates for their own services.

The chapter titled *Educational Situation of Migrant Families in Serbia*, by Jana Mišović, depicts the results of the study concerned with people crossing the Balkan route and not being able to move further along the migration paths to the rest of Europe. The focus of the study is their educational situation, how the migrant family members of different ages value and make use of the educational programs offered to them by different organizations. Results offer important insight showing that, although all participants value offered educational opportunities, their participation rate in learning activities depends on their family roles — parents less being able to participate due to other family responsibilities. This interaction between family role and participation also matches with family role and type of education (formal, non-formal). The author highlights the need to further develop educational programs for migrants, encompassing not just the migrant families, but also the local population, sensibilizing them for the needs of migrants.

The significance of the research conducted by Natalija Gojak and Zorica Milošević, reported in the chapter *Educational Support to Families with a Member Suffering from Alzheimer's Disease*, is in its comprehensive encompassment of different actors and aspects related to this specific form of family adult education and health support programs. The authors find most of the existing support programs insufficient and inadequate, as the families with members suffering from Alzheimer's disease are in dire need of more systematic support and learning opportunities related not just to personal area, but also the ones related to family education and community participation and development.

A European Integration Perspective on the History of Education in the European Economic Community by Philipp Assinger takes us back to the 1970s and 1980s, the time of implementation of the neoliberal frameworks in European policy. The chapter depicts the European integration in regards to education, viewed and analyzed from the perspective of neo-functional and liberal theory. Thoroughly analyzing and explaining changes in this process, the author highlights how it evolved between two internally contrasted dimensions: nation-state sovereignty and common policy, as well as vocational training and general education.

In the chapter *Active Citizenship and Adult Learning as an Oscillating Priority of EU Policy*, Martin Kopecký investigates the changes of the concept of active citizenship envisioned and depicted in EU policy documents related to adult learning and education. Examining the question from up-to-date and relevant theoretical perspectives, the author takes the reader to the key time points and corresponding adult learning and education relevant documents where the concept of active citizenship is used — offering his critical reflection and emphasizing the gap between academic/scientific approaches and policy use of the notion.

Advancement in the implementation of lifelong learning and participation in adult education and further needs for their development in the context of ongoing restructuralization of industries in the EU and Hungary are addressed in Reka Toth's chapter *Individual Learning Account — an Efficient Way to Contribute Boosting Participation in Adult Education*. Special attention is devoted to the role of the *individual learning account* concept as a means to advance adult education participation — the main features and potential further functions of the concept are discussed and analyzed. The author concludes that the concept may be able to lead to more independent and efficient financing/funding for further enhancement of adult education participation.

Considering the globalization pressures on the young adults' prospects for their future as qualified professionals and citizens, Maja Stojanovic and Petra A. Robinson, in the chapter *Brain Drain, Brain Gain: Why Do Non-Native English-Speaking Students Decide to Enroll at a Graduate School in the Southern United States?*, bring an interesting discussion about the brain drain/brain gain debate, by interviewing six non-native English-speaking students that decided to enroll in US universities to increase their academic knowledge and qualifications. The

conclusions are very thought-provoking for debating the organization of higher education opportunities in the countries of origin of these young adults, concerning the connection between local/regional labor market offers and younger adult students' expectations. Some more personal factors and other more institutional issues emerged from the narratives of the interviewees, but all of the conclusions may be read through the andragogy lenses: the motivations of adult learners to continue engaged in learning are based on an intricate set of reasons that are not linear and directly apparent.

Perceptions of Students in HE on Teaching Ideology and Authority by Lecturers: Questioning Neutral Viewpoints about Academia, by José M. Barroso-Tristán, Rodrigo Matos de Souza, and José González-Monteagudo, is a chapter devoted to discussing issues related to freedom of expression and thought in higher education contexts in Brazil by young adult students. The authors did a small qualitative research with a focus group methodology involving 18 students and found that the authoritative postures of teachers and their ideological impositions foster a close-mindedness attitude in the classroom. Because of such form of symbolic violence, the students referred that they are being silenced in their opinions and political-pedagogical thoughts, preventing them from deepening and developing their own autonomy, which directly affect their learning and self-determination as adults and citizens. The conclusions open a reflection about the role of higher education teachers — and the higher education system itself — in what concerns to power and authority exerted in a context of learning that should be characterized as ideal to foster critical thinking and free discussion of ideas and ideals.

Natassa Raikou's chapter, *Approaching Contemporary Higher Education in Greece Through the Lens of University Pedagogy: What Is the Role of Adult Education in this Context?*, presents a reflection about higher education mission and university teaching strategies in Greece, debating the advantages of using the principles of adult education to help students to develop critical thinking and autonomy in the use of information and knowledge. The authors argue about the need to rethink the traditional university pedagogy and present some examples of active and motivating teaching strategies that may be used in different areas. By explaining the development of a longitudinal study that lasted for a decade, using the Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience (TLAE) Method, in the University of Patras, it was evident that its impact on participants revealed the importance of the three dimensions of learning that should be seen as intersected: content, incentive, context.

The chapter *Arts and Academia in Málaga: The Concerns of Social Science Education Regarding Social Engagement and the University's Third Mission*, authored by Clotilde Lechuga-Jiménez, departs from a large European Project led by Poland with the title "Exploring European Cultural Heritage for fostering academic teaching and social responsibility in Higher Education" (EU_CUL). The universities' relations with different cultural entities and diverse stakeholders

from Málaga (Spain), a city with a very rich patrimony (e.g., museums, archeological sites, monuments) are explored, debating the importance of creating opportunities for the higher education institutions to exert their social responsibility. This may imply the inclusion in teaching programs of concrete activities (e.g., study visits) that surely have learning advantages for students. At the same time, it may represent economic benefits for all the entities involved by reconsidering cultural heritage as a strategy for enjoyment and knowledge. Also, cooperation with such community entities may open further opportunities for labor market insertion of future professionals. Through the organization of seminars, art and cultural heritage conferences, debates, exhibitions, among other possibilities, the universities and the cultural entities may create joint programs for citizens of all ages, fostering lifelong learning.

Anett Kovács presents *Survey on Validation of Learning Outcomes Acquired in Non-Formal Learning Context in Hungarian Higher Education*. The survey involved 1282 higher education teachers. The practical purpose and long-term goal of the research is to gain information based on the results of the research and contribute to the development of the national validation system with possible recommendations. On the one hand, the research provides knowledge on teaching and the evaluation culture of teachers and the current validation practices in the Hungarian higher education system. On the other hand, it provides an insight into teachers' opinion on validation of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal learning context. In addition to that, it informs us on what validation practice the teachers use. Finally, the supporting factors and barriers of validation were examined.

The chapter *Implications of Diversity in Program Planning — A German Perspective*, by Clara Kuhlen, consists in a theoretical reflection framed on the PhD thesis of the author about the concept of diversity in program planning in adult education. The concept of diversity is scrutinized through an intersectional approach, and program planning is considered a complex issue in adult education practice due to its antinomies, such as the adjustment of economic and educational functional logics. Built on the necessity of taking societal, political and economic implications into account, diversity is considered an influential factor for program planning and used in order to analyze its complexities. Following a qualitative approach, and in order to understand how diversity is respected and included as a core value in program planning, the author conducted problem-centered interviews with program planners, but the main conclusions are not presented in this chapter.

The question whether short-term vocational trainings are a significant determinant in changing the position of the individual in the labor market is addressed in Vesna Fabian and Miomir Despotović's chapter on *Quality of Vocational Trainings as a Factor for the Employment of the Individual in the Labor Market*. The results show that the quality of the vocational trainings represents

a significant determinant in changing the position of an individual in the labor market, as there is a correlation found between high quality trainings and successful employment. The trainees with work experience relevant to the attended vocational training, or the trainees attending vocational trainings based on the needs of the local labor market have better positions in the labor market.

The chapter *Work-Based Learning for Higher Level VET Provision*, by Zorica Milošević and Ljiljana Dimitrijević, reflects on a regional work-based learning in the framework of current European training and education policies. They depict the regional cooperation, within a "Master 5" project between Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia devoted to achieving further development and greater visibility of higher VET opportunities in the region. The chapter offers an insight in the current state and specifics of development in the field of worked-based learning and VET in the region showing that modernization of VET boosted an integration of non-formal education and work-based learning, and further development of models highlighting transparency of competencies.

In the field of teacher professionalization, within the chapter *Drawbacks and Opportunities of Reflection-Centered Concepts for the Further Education of Teaching Professionals*, Anita Pachner and Christina Baust examine to what extent teachers are sensitive to handling heterogeneous learning groups. They introduce the concept of professionalization based on a *difference theoretical approach* defining it as the ability to deal with conflicting perspectives and requirements for action in appropriate way. In their research, they have identified two central elements of teaching practice that are sensitive to heterogeneity: *awareness of one's own practice of observation and action* and *willingness to refine one's own practice of observation and action,* and they highlighted the potential of reflection-oriented learning environments.

The study devoted to examining the issue of programs that aim to support career development is presented in the chapter *Concept of Dynamic Careers from Students' Perspectives — I Will Try it by Myself, but Don't Leave Me Alone*, by Dubravka Mihajlović, Aleksandra Pejatović and Edisa Kecap. The study investigates the way in which young adults (204 undergraduate students of University of Belgrade) understand the concept, i.e., the notion of career, as well as what kind of expectations they have from the courses focusing on career development support. Results show that the students have extremely diverse and sometimes contradictory understanding of the concept of career, as well as that student expectations regarding support for career development can be clustered into several categories and subcategories, which is especially significant for the creators of career development support programs.

The chapter entitled *The Most Important Characteristics of Adult Learning Professionals in Serbia: Research in Progress Report* is authored by Viktória Beszédes. Beginning with a brief historical background about the development of adult educators as professionals with a consolidated identity, she debates the

influence on this process of the political efforts of Serbia to become a member of the European Union (since 2012) and of the publication (in 2014) of the first Law on Adult Education. Afterwards, she presents some reflections about Serbian educational system and the country's formal and non-formal opportunities for learning that are open to citizens, highlighting the lack of information about providers and participants in non-formal adult education due to the inexistence of national systematic data. The empirical research involved an extensive semi-structured interview with six experts with more than twenty years of experience in adult education. She did a SWOT analysis with the answers obtained, which showed how the interviewees perceive the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the Serbian adult education. International and national legal determinations seem to be important to the improvements in adult education field, but most of all the effectiveness of the adult education activity is connected to a set of factors that are centered in adults as learners in their contexts of life.

In her study *Invisible Profession: Facts and Tendencies about 30 Years of Adult Education in Hungary*, Eva Farkas introduces the developmental trajectory of the adult education system in Hungary in the past 30 years. An important focus of the study is the analysis of the situation and training system of adult learning professionals in Hungary. The analysis led the author to a conclusion that even though at the level of rhetoric and professional policy documents it is a priority goal to educate adults in Hungary, the practice differs. The author states that adult education has an extraordinarily peripheral role and is exposed to the subjective value judgement of a small group of decision makers.

Robert Smith and Vicky Duckworth are the authors of the chapter *Digital Research as a Resource for Reimagining Further Education* that draws on the project "Further Education in England: Transforming lives and communities". Departing from the narratives of a diversity of participants (learners, teachers, employers and learners' family members), the authors present the findings from a collaborative research project into how further education, supported by critical pedagogy, may offer a new opportunity in which adult learners who have often had negative experiences of schooling are able to experience education as a transformative process. These innovative strategies to promote learning in adult life made use of a digital platform to present and disseminate publicly the participants´ narratives and show how research can use new and emerging technologies to have an impact on people's life. The authors concluded that digital literacy and practices are to be used in research training in order to meet the needs of participants in contemporary times.

To foster deeper understanding in research of the relationship between the work-related usage of informational communication technology and the learning of employees, Kristinka Ovesni, Nataša Matović and Saška Janković use mixed methods research and discuss its results in the chapter *The Work-Related Usage of Informational Communication Technology and the Learning of Employees*. They

applied explanatory sequential design using nested samples for the quantitative and qualitative components. In the quantitative component, data were obtained with scales, and analyzed from 483 employees in different companies in Serbia, while for qualitative component semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 respondents from the same sample. Their results indicate that employees value work-related learning supported by ICT and that ICT-based learning is often used in organizations: to communicate and inform employees, and to find an adequate solution to possible problems.

Nikola Petrović and Jelena Anđelković Labrović concentrate on problems of adult learning in a virtual environment. The purpose of their chapter, *Learning Resistance and Defense: A Data-Driven Approach*, is to identify the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of the data-driven approach to learning resistance and defense, which come from learners' feelings of isolation, disorientation and helplessness. Resistance to learning is the learner's reaction to the current situation, while defense is the result of long-term developments. A data-driven approach to responding to learning problems recognizes off-task behaviors, current behaviors that are unrelated to learning and disengagement, a behavioral tendency that continually affects the learning process. Once the behavior is recognized, the issue of further action is raised. As they point out, there are three possibilities: the educator can make the decision on corrective actions, and consequently take action; the system makes the decision on corrective actions and educator takes action; and full automation — when the system decides and implements the action independently.

In the chapter *May "Entrepreneurial Andragogy" Be a Response to the Challenges of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies?*, Jean-Michel Mégret and Jérôme Eneau argue the importance of working towards the development of autonomous and critical entrepreneurs by promoting what they call "emancipatory self-directed learning" in adult learners, instead of training them to learn some operational competencies or procedures to start a business. Departing from the analysis of the French context and policies regarding the promotion of inclusive entrepreneurship, the authors focused their analysis in the problems faced by very small enterprises, which deal with great pressure to survive. Using quantitative and qualitative data from a sample of entrepreneurs from Breton, France, the authors highlight some internal and external factors — an interaction of individual features and contextual issues — that may contribute to conceptualize the principles of "entrepreneurial andragogy".

Pierre Faller and Eric Bertrand take a closer look into the workplace training in the chapter *Professional Development at the Crossroads of Economic and Social Development Examining Multi-Dimensional Shifts in Perspective and Sense-Making by a Group of French Leaders*. They explore the transformative journey of their participants using a multi-referential framework which combines two lines of research: a multi-dimensional approach of human experience at work and a

transformative perspective. It appears to be promising in better understanding the richness and complexity of how sense-making develops and is renegotiated over time throughout experience. The study shows that the transformative process is the product of dynamic interactions between an individual's way of meaning-making and the environment around.

The chapter *Entrepreneurship Education — New Content for the New Paradigm*, by Vukašin Grozdić, presents the results of the content and discourse analyses of the relevant EU and Serbia strategic and policy documents related to entrepreneurship and education from 2010 to 2019. The findings suggest that in regards to entrepreneurship within the context of adult education, the dominant discourse in strategic and policy documents amplify the economic value and function of entrepreneurship education with or without equally following it with narrative related to social entrepreneurship — altogether indicating a shift form the welfare state model more towards the neoliberal one. Within more recent policy documents, however, entrepreneurship is acknowledged as a complex skill, being conceptually extended to other socio-cultural dimensions as well.

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