

# Interrogating Sustainability in Adult Learning Policy: European and Global Perspectives

## First Call

### Second Conference of the ESREA Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education

Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

18 - 20 June 2014

Improved learning opportunities for adults are urgently needed – opportunities, for both young and mature adults, which strengthen their capacity to meet the challenges of life in today's world of possibility and risk. Recent social and economic crises, as well as climate change and biodiversity, underline the urgent need for sustainability in societies and lifestyles – and for adult learning policies and institutions that can contribute to this.

The 2014 ESREA Policy Studies conference will interrogate the political aims and achievements of sustainability in adult learning. It draws inspiration from the UNESCO declaration on *Education for Sustainable Development* (2009): how can its emphasis on participatory, critical teaching and learning methods which can motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour, and take action, for sustainable development be incorporated in policies – in Europe and the world? Social and economic crises have shown the fragility of existing institutions and policies. The development of sustainable policies and practices for adult and lifelong education has become vital.

In this situation it is important to analyse how sustainability is – and could be – integrated into policies for adult learning in

the multi-level context of different national, social and cultural environments, in which national and transnational levels of governance interact. It is also important to interrogate critically the concept of sustainable development itself.

Adult education is generally less institutionalised than primary, secondary and tertiary education. Many different actors in education, business and civil society, as well as national governments and transnational organizations, interact in shaping adult education. Studies of adult learning policy must examine power differentials, patterns of competition and collaboration, and the various educational rationalities involved – both in the structures and among the actors in the field. They should seek to uncover the anatomy of policies and the conditions that shape them, and to identify strategies and lines of action that could contribute to a more sustainable provision of good learning opportunities.

Studying adult learning policies raises important theoretical and methodological questions. Research will often need to draw on concepts and methods from different disciplines, such as political science, sociology, cultural studies as well as

education. The interfaces between institutionalized education, learning and life-worlds are crucial to adult education, and combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods will often be needed. The normative assumptions underlying policies need to be delineated and analysed. Although policy processes increasingly have trans-national dimensions, comprehensive data on the development of institutions and policies for

adult learning is still mainly available in national contexts and languages.

Scholars from all countries are invited to submit proposals. Proposals may relate to any part of the world, and to any topic related to policy in adult education and lifelong learning.

The following list is intended to inspire, rather than to set boundaries.

### **1. Sustainable adult learning policy in the perspective of globalisation**

- How does globalisation affect sustainable policies for adult education and learning?
- How sustainable are the policy processes of inter-state entities, such as the EU in relation to adult education and learning?
- What are the roles of communication and governance in adult education and learning?
- How are networking linkages, exchanges and interactions among stakeholders in adult education organised and how do they work?

### **2. Quality in adult education and learning**

- What are the policy implications of the concept of sustainability for adult education and lifelong learning?
- How sustainable are processes for evaluating quality of teaching and research on adult learning?

### **3. Adult learning and sustainable lifestyles**

- What does the incorporation of ecological perspectives into adult education imply?
- How are questions of ecological crisis addressed in adult education?
- What are the policy implications of migration for adult education and learning?
- How are needs and problems of an ageing population addressed in adult learning policy?

### **4. Research on adult learning policy and sustainability**

- What insights have key theorists to contribute?
- What are the differences between opinion, advocacy and scientific research?
- What is and can be the relationship between researchers and policy actors?
- What methods are relevant and what are the criteria for validity and rigour?

Contributors need not confine themselves to the above topics. Proposals which develop themes and issues from the first Policy Studies Network conference are particularly welcome.

### ***Guidelines for Submission of Proposals***

Proposals should be sent as an attached file [in \*.doc, \*.docx, or \*.pdf format]. They should be typed, single spaced, in A4. Include title and 5 keywords.

Author(s) name(s), institutional affiliation(s), phone number(s) and postal details should be stated only in the email accompanying the abstract.

*Paper proposals* should not exceed 600 words including: Title; 3-5 keywords; aims/objectives; main perspective or theoretical/conceptual framework; methods, research design, mode of inquiry; data sources or evidence; results and/or conclusions; significance to the field of policy studies in adult education.

*Symposium proposals* should not exceed 1200 words including: Title; 3-5 keywords; aims/objectives; significance for the field of policy studies in adult education; and short abstracts (approx. 200 words each) of all papers. They should also nominate a Chairperson and a Discussant.

All abstracts must be submitted by 6 January 2014 to: [esrea.psae2@learning.aau.dk](mailto:esrea.psae2@learning.aau.dk)

All proposals will be blind reviewed by the scientific committee.

Acceptance will be confirmed by 20 February 2014.

Final versions of papers (no more than 5000 words *including* references) must be submitted by 15 May 2014. Please use the APA (American Psychological Association) reference system.

***Presentations:*** 30 minutes maximum; at least 15 minutes will be allowed for discussion.

***Language:*** The conference language is English.

### ***Organizing Committee***

- Professor John Holford, University of Nottingham, UK, [john.holford@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:john.holford@nottingham.ac.uk)
- Assoc. professor Marcella Milana, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark, [mami@dpu.dk](mailto:mami@dpu.dk)
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- Susan Robertson, Bristol University, UK
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- Henning Salling Olesen, Roskilde University, Denmark
- Terri Seddon, Monash University, Australia
- Paula Guimares, University of Lisbon, Portugal
- Triin Roosalu, Tallinn University, Estonia
- Julia Preece, University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa

## **The ESREA Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education**

The Conference is organised by the ESREA Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education, a network of ESREA (the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults):

[http://www.esrea.org/policy\\_studies](http://www.esrea.org/policy_studies)