

Call for Papers

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Adult Education in the Context of Work

Edited by

Katrin Kraus & Gabriele Molzberger

Adult education is associated with work in many ways: Participation in continuing education is often triggered by employment or is linked to work. In addition, the need for continuing education often results from economic or organisational changes. Aspiration to learn also arises from work processes, whether within employment or in other areas such as care work, voluntary or political work. At the same time, commitments arising from employment or care work make it difficult to participate in adult education. And even though the boundaries between general and vocational continuing education are generally considered to be fluid or ambiguous, many providers' profiles focus on vocational and work-related education.

Adult education and work are thus related to each other in many different ways, but their relationship is, simultaneously, characterised by contradictions. Even the scientific use of the term 'work' is contingent; its definition interwoven with ecological, social, economic and technological prerequisites and conditions. These aspects of the relationship between adult education and work deserve analytic attention when discussing adult education in the context of work.

With this focus, we invite contributions that pursue (educational) theoretical, empirical, comparative, international or historiographical perspectives and thus illuminate potential relations and areas of tension in 'adult education in the context of work'.

- The relationship between continuing education and the labour market can be examined in the double reference to the labour market and educational system as well as in the form of country, regional or sectoral studies. Continuing education topics can also be studied in the context of national or international labour market developments, technological innovations or changed legal requirements, including studies that focus on the political framework, programme planning or professional action.
- Particularly in the area of care work or political or voluntary work, specific forms of adult education and learning often arise. For example, care work, e.g., parenting or caring for the elderly, or voluntary work is often associated with informal learning processes and also with attending specific adult education programmes. Political work, on the other hand, not only involves informal learning but often also provides its own forms of events for the public, e.g., workshops, rallies or lectures that are explicitly linked to an educational claim such as democracy education. The relationship between care work or political work and adult and continuing education is also interesting from an international perspective as its concrete form is not only shaped by different national regulations and the respective political and economic situation but is also influenced by international developments.

- Target groups in adult education often correspond with those targeted by an activating labour market and social policy, e.g., refugees, unemployed people or people with family responsibilities. In the national and international context, labour market and continuing education are sometimes even directly linked through definitions of these target groups, for example, in the National Skills Strategy in Germany or in integration policy. Studies on configuring and addressing target groups can provide important insights into the relationship between adult education and the labour market.
- References to work are sometimes even directly integrated into the conceptual design of continuing education programmes and measures, for example, in the areas of work-oriented basic education, in-company training, workplace learning, service learning and internship support. Also directly related to work and employment are the recognition and validation of skills or coaching and counselling approaches. Beyond theoretical-conceptual or empirical justifications, adult education research should also analyse the interrelatedness of these programmes with the macro-level (social structures) and the micro-level (subject constructions).
- Various players operate at the intersection of continuing education and work. Labour market players, in particular the social partners, professional associations and industry organisations, bring their interests to bear in shaping the continuing education framework. Moreover, those associations and organisations themselves act directly or indirectly as providers of continuing education. The Federal Employment Agency, for example, is influential in shaping the continuing education landscape in Germany through the programmes it finances or initiates. Universities of applied science legitimise themselves in part through their funding allocation and qualification services in the adult education sector. Supranational players are also active at the interface between continuing education, economic policy and the labour market, such as the European Union with its 'European Skills Agenda', which in turn is linked to the "European Digital Strategy" or the "European Green Deal".
- As part of adult education in the context of work, a social theory perspective can be used to examine the discussions about the changing status of employment and the significance of other forms of work for adult education. A question here is, for example, what the flexibilisation of employment and individualised forms of work mean for continuing education. The renewed discussion about the social division of labour- also with reference to criteria of difference such as gender or socio-economic status- and the construction and erosion of 'standardised labour relations' are just as much a part of this context as the debates on new forms of labour, temporary work and crowd work.
- Last but not least, the relationship between work and adult education plays a decisive role in life courses and biographies. Linked to this relationship are questions of standardisation, institutionalisation and legitimisation of a 'standardised life course' in the respective socio-historical context and any associated reviewing processes as well as the reproduction of social inequality through continuing education. Approaches critical of capitalism and power analyse, for example, discourses on the demand for skilled workers and labour shortages and show their influence on individual educational opportunities and decisions and life courses. Labour and education are also influenced by social and collective processes and frameworks such as 'Beruf' in Germany. Empirical studies, reconstructions and critical analyses of the biographical processes and biographically relevant constructions of a 'working on oneself', which are often the reason for reading guidebooks or attending adult and continuing education courses, open up a field often investigated by adult education research together with neighbouring (sub-)disciplines in educational science and beyond.

For this issue of the Journal for Research on Adult Education, contributions are invited from researchers who use these - or other - thematic approaches to deal with the crucial relationship between adult education and work in its various forms and who systematically map, analyse and discuss adult education in the context of work. In addition to (trans)national or regional analyses, international and comparative perspectives are also of interest for this discussion.

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You may send an abstract of your proposed article (max. 500 words) by **January 15, 2025**, to the editorial office: redaktion-zfw@die-bonn.de. The abstract should include the names of authors and affiliations (does not count toward word limit), working title, topic(s) that will be addressed, method(s), and countr(ies) of focus.

Please submit your final **manuscript** at www.springer.com/journal/40955

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