

ESREA

European Society for Research on the Education of Adults

Network on the History of Adult Education and Training in Europe

The European seminar of Turku: *Life course and learning in history: cultural, societal and individual perspectives on adult education and training in Europe.*

8-9 June 2009, University of Turku (Finland)

The first seminar of the renewed network on the History of Adult Education and Training in Europe was held last June at the University of Turku. 14 papers were presented by participants from 8 countries (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Portugal and Sweden). Life course and learning in different contexts as well as various concepts of lifelong education and learning were presented and debated.

Continuities and discontinuities in the concepts were the core questions for several papers. Vera Centeno (Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany) discussed the international development of lifelong learning as a policy concept and showed that it could not be understood without an analysis of earlier conceptualisations of Education across the lifespan. Ove Korsgaard (University of Aarhus, Denmark) put forward the de-construction of the term 'people' through different periods and called in question the normative interpretations of 'folkeoplysning' that frequently appear in translations from a language into another.

International comparisons and influences constituted another theme explored in four papers. Anders Nilsson (Lund University, Sweden) undertook to situate the development of Swedish vocational education and training between 1900 and 1960 in the context of three different models: British, French and German ones. Naoko Suzuki (University of Tokushima, Japan), who was the only non-European participant, presented an overview of the development of adult education and training in Japan through its original features and western influences, from 1603 to the late 1960's. Christine Zeuner (Helmut-Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany) discussed the institutionalisation process of regional adult education in northern Germany, influenced by Danish and German ideas. Kirsi Ahonen (University of Tampere, Finland) explored the changes in relations of Finnish and Swedish adult education institutions to the school system and in the age structure of students during the 20th century.

Adult and vocational education institutions and their audiences were examined in three papers. Anna Halme (University of Turku, Finland) presented the Finnish popular education movement before the Second World War through the example of the Lahti folk high school, its audience, curricula and activities. In his second paper written with Fay Lundh Nilsson, Anders Nilsson showed how a new database consisting of annual reports of the folk high schools in Sweden allowed reconsidering the proportion of civic and vocational education in these institutions. Anja Heikkinen (University of Tampere, Finland) discussed the emergence of vocational education as a distinct form in Finland since the late 19th century and how it failed to integrate into academic institutions. Adult education as a discipline was examined in one paper, in which Rainer Aaltonen, Anja Heikkinen and Jukka Tuomisto (University of

Tampere, Finland) discussed the academic, economic and political context of its development in the Finnish universities.

Women learning (or the neglect of women in the adult education policies) constituted a theme explored in three papers. Through a research based on life stories and biographies, Maria José Magalhães (University of Porto, Portugal) examined the way social movements such as trade union or feminist movements appeared to be social sites for learning, relating action to knowledge. Orsolya Kereszty (University of Pécs, Hungary) discussed the experiences of the Sunday Circle, founded in 1915, through autobiographies, letters and diaries of its members, and how it provided means for women to create their own educational 'spheres' in Hungary. Françoise F. Laot (University Paris Descartes, France) showed how the study of a film shot in 1966 could enable reconsidering the history of the adult education policy, notably regarding the role given in it to women only as 'spouses' of learners.

Finally, the paper of Klaus Heuer (Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning, Germany) presented a new achievement: the first meta-archive on the history of adult education in Germany, its aims and its organisation.

Each paper was commented by a discussant chosen from the participants and after that, a debate followed. Discussions provided opportunities for specifying some elements, comparing the situations in different countries and also questioning the outlines of the history of adult education and learning.

The last contribution inspired the idea to develop a European database of archives for the history of adult education. This seems to be a very exciting project but also very difficult to put forward. However, it was decided that Klaus Heuer and Françoise F. Laot should work on a draft on that theme and find out if help could be found at European level.

In order to promote the activities of the new network, participants promised to send to the two convenors all information regarding history of adult education and learning in their countries (websites, famous researchers on that topic, books and so on).

Concerning the publication of the papers, various solutions were debated. Kirsi and Françoise were given the task to establish contacts with editors in order to study the different opportunities. The next seminar, which will be organized in 2011, was also discussed and Budapest was mentioned as a potential location.

Françoise F. Laot, Kirsi Ahonen