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Introduction - and Results

This conference in Bamberg, Germany, September 27-30, 2006 was part of an ongoing series of conferences dealing with the history of adult education. These were the preceding conferences:

Standing International Conference on the History of Adult Education

1986	Oxford/Great Britain	
1988	Aachen/Germany	The State and Adult Education
1990	Jerusalem/Israel	Adult Education in Crisis Situations
1992	Strobl/Austria	National Identity and Adult Education
1994	Brdo/Slovenia	Democracy and Adult Education
1996	Jena/Germany	Personality and Biography in the History of Adult Education
1998e	Dundee/Scotland	The Rise and Fall of Adult Education Institutions and Social Movements
2000	Pécs/Hungary	Ethics, Ideals, and Ideologies in the History of Adult Education
2002	Leiden/Netherlands	Adult Education and Globalisation: Past and Present
2005	Helsinki/Finland	Lifelong Learning and Migration: Historical and contemporary perspectives
2006	Bamberg/Germany	On becoming an Adult Educator

The focus “On Becoming an Adult Educator – historical, contemporary, institutionalized, individual aspects” opened a wide range of questions:

One root of this conference theme can be seen in the 1996-history-conference in Jena, Germany, exploring the theme “Personality and Biography in the History of Adult Education”, dealing with personalities (internationally well-known or just of regional/local influence), their biography, influence, and legacy. In our conference historic personalities can be researched under the specific focus:

- How did important (historic) personalities / individuals “became adult educators”?

- What was their understanding of “adult education”?
- How did their surrounding “world” then (and perhaps now) perceive their activities?
- Volunteers, “Moonlighters”, moral leaders, knowledge-experts, (semi-)professionals - historic examples and developments.
- In which different ways in different times/countries/cultures one became an “Adult Educator”?
- Are there / had there been different types / categories of adult educators?
- How did the role of adult educators develop in institutions?

A second aspect this conference deals with the *contemporary* situation of adult educators:

- What is the knowledge / the competencies / the attitudes expected from adult educators in different historic and contemporary movements / institutions / traditions?
- What are individual growth- and learning processes adult educators go through?
- Education of Adult Educators: What training schemes are available?
- Certification of adult educators?
Is an adult educator a teacher? Professional roles of adult educators.
- What can be trained, what is “personality”?

Of course not all these questions could be answered. But the papers and discussions showed a richness of aspects to “on becoming an Adult Educator”.

A grounded summary of the conference certainly needs more time and space to prepare. But at least three observations and results shall be summarized here:

First: The participants came from 24 different countries, including Hong Kong, India, Israel, Nigeria, Russia and the USA. This may document how internationally widespread the interest in the history of Adult Education has grown.

Second: In the historical part a great number of paths and roles into and in the field of adult education were described. Beyond each individual case the material let identify “prototypes” of what was described as to be “an Adult Educator”. Such **prototypes** tentatively could be constructed from the presented papers:

Scholar/Professor: Clearly scholars are new in the “division of labor”.

Often the description sounds like “growing into that role”. The paper of Faber (pp. 250) is in an autobiographical reflection a

good example of a scholars “way to andragogy”.

The Professional graduated from a University Adult Education Program and works mostly on a higher hierarchy-level in Institution (not necessary “adult educational”), but in staff or organizational development, politics, parliament, CEO, armed forces, church, hospital, research, ... The historic papers do not contain examples (no wonder - this is a quite new development), but the “contemporary” papers describe this group (Gross pp. 271, Egetenmeyer pp. 337, Hinzen/Przybylska pp. 347).

Vocational: Fully employed/paid, often planning, managing - which implies that institutions exist. Not necessary for adult education, but also in HRD, cultural institutions, media etc. Often not trained in Adult Education (Karm: “that they often have not had the opportunity to study how to do their job” p. 275, but “grown into the field” (Karm pp. 281, Henning Loeb pp. 295, Zmeyov pp. 376).

Developer: Grassrooter, facilitator, not teaching, but supporting individuals, groups, and institutions to solve their problems themselves by learning. Could be vocation or volunteer, (selfmade) grassrooters, .dialogers, interactionists, integrators. Not “knowing better”, but “supporting learning”. Example: Oleson and the Study Circle Movement (Tosse, esp. pp. 58).

Teacher: Could be andragogical trained, or subject matter specialist (often not feeling as “adult educator”). Range from fully paid to (mostly) part-timer to high-spirited volunteer, from trainers in companies to grandmas offering cookie courses. Often descriptions document development from “just doing to learning”. (Karm pp. 281, Henning-Loeb pp. 295, qualifying activities Schiebel/Miethe pp. 221, Morris pp. 237).

Organizer: Building and leading an organization. Someone other had the idea - he is building and administrating the organization

Humanist, philanthropist: Enabling learning by political or private infrastructure, not teaching himself (Nemeth pp. 161: István Türr, Hungary: “Türr was the founder ... of so-called Folk Education Circles ... in order to start the education of more than 4 million Hungarian illiterate adults.”)

“Dedicator”: Moral/spiritual leader, romantic, ideology-oriented. Knowing, what learners “really” need: new nation, good culture. Adult Education has to fulfill the function the dedicator wants to come true. Isaac pp. 136 describes personalities (Nicolae Iorga, Dimitri Gusti, Romania) that “had in mind the building of pedagogy of culture specific to Romanian people as well as Romanian

ethics." In a somewhat extreme form also political leaders can be seen as "dedicators", for example "freedom-fighters", as described by Theiss/Bron pp. 203, for Poland.

Orator: Spreads his knowledge/wisdom to everybody who wants (or not), with no training, no institution. Kloubert pp. 147 describes Hryhoriy Skovroda, Ukraine, - "a wandering teacher and searcher for happiness". Classical personalities might be seen in the same category: Socrates, the Hyde Park Speakers; also authors that want to educate can be included here (ie. Rousseau).

"*The Wise*" is asked for advice (spiritual, health, practical). No teaching, no institution, but learner activity (Bin-Sallik¹ describes the Australian aborigines Chief David Unaipon).

Of course these types are overlapping and might be better sorted or differentiated. But it seems worth looking for typical elements, to understand better what the term "adult educator" may mean, such reducing confusion in understanding and discussion. What became clear: "Adult Educator" encompasses many contexts and connotations.

A third result from the contemporary part of the conference might be: Even in this small conference a number of activities to qualify adult educators were described: Morris (pp. 237), Eggenmeyer (pp. 337), Hinzen/Przybylska (pp. 347), Popovic (pp. 362), Zmeyov (pp. 376). It seems, that this important task has received attention and priority (Nuisl pp. 323). It might be interesting to do an evaluation in ten years from now to find what was achieved.

These conferences brought together again international scholars, researchers, and professionals, and gave the chance to meet international colleagues, perhaps old and certainly new friends, offered the exchange between experts, and - last but not least - let experience the 1000-year old Bamberg, UNESCO's world heritage, with its romantic streets, beer-gardens with the unique smoked beer, cathedral and the city-hall in the middle of the river. We - faculty and students of the chair of Andragogy - are proud we could welcome so many international and national experts at our university. Thank you!

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¹ in Friedenthal-Haase, Martha (ed) (1998): Personality and Biography in the History of Adult Education. Vol. II. Frankfurt: Lang. P. 503 - 515