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Intercultural Professionalisation in Adult Education

Abstract: The probability of working and living in culturally diverse contexts has increased throughout the last two decades. To avoid intercultural conflicts and to foster an effective and peaceful cooperation among humans of different cultural backgrounds, people need to be prepared and trained. Though there is a growing demand for intercultural trainings, there has been very limited research in adult education on intercultural topics rather than international-comparative work. This article discusses the needs and perspectives for an intercultural professionalisation of adult educators. It will therefore cover theories of culture and the discourse about profession, professionalism and professionalisation in adult education. In the end questions about future prospects of an intercultural professionalisation research will be asked.

Key words: cultural theories, intercultural learning, profession, professionalism, professionalisation, quality in adult education.

Background

Cultural diversity, understood as a combination of people with different cultural socialisation and backgrounds, can be found in various work and life situations: whether in teams in workplaces, in university courses, virtual work groups or in private life. The evolution of information and communication technologies, the opening of and access to economic markets, and new mobility opportunities have increased the probability and the amount of situations where people of culturally diverse backgrounds meet. Besides societal transformation, processes that promote cultural overlap situations are also politically induced. For example in documents of the European Union the mobility of European citizens is promoted, students' participation in the Erasmus program is supported in order for them to

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gain international experience and training, and study outcomes are increasingly comparable on a European level; and recognized by other countries in the Union (see European Commission 2000 and 2012; Cedefop, 2012).

The question in this context is how to prepare people for contexts of cultural diversity and how to further guide them because cultural diversity can be understood as a resource, and this leads on the one hand to new ideas and projects, but also, on the other hand, a challenge which fosters uncertainty, disorientation and conflicts (see Adler, 2002). In the last two decades, a barely manageable number of publications on intercultural issues have been published, offers on intercultural competence development have been increasing and new educational settings have been developed. Unlike other disciplines, such as anthropology, communication studies, teacher education or economics, adult and continuing education was, beside some individual work (see Bleil, 2006), more targeted to an international-comparative discourse focusing on comparisons of systems, financing or qualifications (see Tippelt, and von Hippel, 2010). A general research body on "intercultural adult education" at a European and international level cannot be stated yet. The present article is devoted to this "intercultural blindness" of European adult education and tries to give an initial impetus for an intercultural adult education research. The focus of interest lies on the observation of an intercultural professionalisation of adult educators. For this purpose, the two aspects of "culture", "cultural approaches" and "professionalisation in adult education" respectively, will be considered.

Culture

Referring to Busche, the word "culture" stems from the Latin word "cultus" and has two basic meanings. First, to maintain, crop or farm, secondly to worship (Busche, 2000: 69ff.). Generally, Busche differentiates between four dimensions in which culture can be used (*ibid*.): first, agriculturally within the meaning of growing plants or grains, secondly, creative and artistic in the context of e.g., opera, theatre or cinema, thirdly, lifestyle, politeness and manners, and finally, culture of peoples as customs and traditions. Bolten derives the word "culture" from "colere" in Latin and "cultiver" in French and makes a subdivision in "close" and "open" concepts of culture (see Bolten, 2007: 39ff.). Thus he names "cultus" and "high culture" as expressions of a narrow concept of culture. The origin of high culture therefore lies in maintaining, upgrading and forming, so it is this understanding that can mainly be found in arts and education today. Bolten mainly criticises that the presence of a high culture position produces a perspec-

tive that allows a culture to define itself as superior to other cultures (*ibid.:* 43). On the other hand, he describes the extended concept of culture as a specific context of human behaviour and social practice (Bolten, 2007: 48). Moreover he subdivides the extended concept of culture in a closed and an open culture term (Bolten 2007: 47f.). The closed culture term is defined by a spatial focusing. This focus may refer to nations, countries or language areas. In contrast to that, an open concept of culture refers to dynamic changes of a culture through social relationships, networks or cultural exchanges by migrational processes (Bolten, 2007: 45ff.)

For the topic and aim of this article, only the last dimension by Busche in terms of morals, customs and traditions and the extended concept of culture by Bolten are of an applicable character as the other areas are related to issues of agricultural sciences, arts and studies of lifestyles, and environmental topics, and do not constitute a reference point. Simultaneously, the understanding of culture should not be limited to international or national cultures, but the approach of the open concept of culture is set consequently stronger in terms of social relationships and networks. As will be demonstrated below, an open concept of culture offers for possibilities on a micro- and meso-cultural level, so that not only cultural systems, but individuals too, move into the focus of analysis.

There is no general definition of "culture" because definitions vary according to the time of their appearance and the professional scientific focus. A definition that reflects fundamental characteristics of culture, offers a great deal of overlap with current cultural definitions, and acts as a starting point for further discussions, can be found in a definition by the German cultural psychologist Thomas (1994).

First of all Thomas describes culture as "universal". This suggests that there is no culture-free space and each person is influenced by culture in all areas of life. As a "carrier of culture", different units such as nations, societies, organisations or groups are named, which differ in size, but what they have in common is that they are always formed by several persons. Thus culture is a collective and not an individual phenomenon that exists only when several people share and act together. At the same time a differentiation into different collectives includes an understanding in the sense of an open concept of culture that transcends nations and also represents an evolution of older cultural definitions (Flechsig, 1997: 3f.).

Furthermore, culture determines action, thinking, perception and judgement of people in collectives (*ibid.*). The equality or similarities of these four aspects, which are shared by more than one person, compose a system of orientation. The fact that all members of a culture align themselves to similar values, norms and experiences and act accordingly, gives them guidance and safety,

which arises from the fact that they know how they and other members of their own culture behave in certain contexts. This perception of "normality" causes predictability of behaviour, provides orientation and contributes to the environmental management of the various players. The common orientation is conveyed by symbols. This concludes an essential feature of theories of communicational approaches. Thomas also uses the notion of "belonging", which implies both membership and the non-belonging to a group. This indirectly brings up criteria associated to in-group and out-group.

It should be critically mentioned that in Thomas's definition a rather passive and rigid cultural understanding becomes obvious. Culture exists and shapes the members of a collective. Such a kind of understanding excludes aspects of mutual influence of culture and actors, who may change cultures by their perceptions, thinking, evaluations and actions (see Bolten 2007: 75ff.). Possible triggers of such long-term processes of change could be external factors such as environmental conditions and increased contact with other cultures, but also cultural and technological inventions or intrinsic triggers such as demographic changes (*ibid*). What remains is: Culture is a collective phenomenon that describes similarities in thinking, feeling, evaluation and action, creates orientation and safety that is necessary to survive borders, is circumvented to other collectives from within different systems of orientation and is opened towards processes of interpretation. While in this sub-chapter the origin of culture is described and a definition of the term with specific characteristics is given, and therefore the question "What is culture?" has been answered, the consideration of different approaches and theories of culture is still paramount.

Cultural approaches

Below, the iceberg model and layer models are described as theoretical constructs for the analysis and explanation of culture at a macro level perspective. Those approaches are understood as macro-analytical, as they detect cultures at the level of national cultures and superior systems (Bolten 2007: 99ff.). In contrast to this, subsequent approaches refer to meso- and micro-analytical perspectives that are based on interactions, social relationships, networks and groups (*ibid*.).

Iceberg Model

The original iceberg model is divided into three units, assuming a visible and an invisible part of culture (Osgood, 1951: 210ff.). As with a real iceberg, where only

a minimum of the total is visible above the sea level, only a minor part of culture is perceptible by cultural strangers. The far larger part lies below the threshold of detection and need to be discovered (*ibid.*). The tip of the iceberg portrays all visible and detectable phenomena such as language, behaviour, objects, clothes or appearance. This category is called "symbols" (*ibid.*). Below the symbols one can find "values and norms" (*ibid.*), which are not obvious, but however, have an impact on the visible parts such as behaviour. Farthest below the surface of a culture, "basic assumptions" (*ibid.*) that comprise the worldview and general attitudes to society and people, build the fundament of a culture. That part outsiders can fathom only with great difficulty (*ibid.*). Bolten has reduced the first model to two levels above and below the limit of detection and he differentiates between "Perceptas" (sensually perceptible expressions of culture) and "Conceptas" (underlying interpretation structures for Perceptas) (Bolten, 2007: 95).

Layer models

Compared to the iceberg model, layer models proceed similarly but reach a substantially higher degree of differentiation, and stress the mutual influence and interdependence of individual layers (see Schein, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 1999, quoted in Dahl, 2000 and Dülfer, 2001). Existing layer models can be differentiated, by focussing either on consecutive layers/levels or circular models resembling an onion. Spencer-Oatey substructures his layer model into four circles, which mutually influence each other (Spencer-Oatey, 1999, quoted in Dahl, 2000). The outermost layer consists of "rituals and behaviour" or "artefacts and products" that can easily be experienced by outsiders. The underlying layer is described as "systems and institutions" and includes economic and social systems as well as political and legislative institutions (*ibid.*). Layer three represents "norms, values, and value settings" of a culture (*ibid.*). The inner core of the onion-like layers model provides "basic values and basic assumptions" that represent the centre of a culture (*ibid.*). The difficulties for a foreign cultural observer are to explore the interdependence of single layers and to advance to the core values of a culture *(ibid.*). Schein developed a model with three levels (see Schein, 1985: 9ff.): artefacts, values and basic assumptions. Unlike Spencer-Oatey, who tried to explain cultures in general, Schein focused his models and subsequent research far more on organisational cultures (see Schein, 2010). In the range of current layer models, probably the most elaborated model has been developed by Dülfer, who divides culture into six levels and involves temporal-historical components, as well as influences of external factors, such as systems and other cultures (see Dülfer, 2001).

Cultural dimensions

While layer models primarily meet statements about the structure of single cultures to analyse and describe them, cultural dimensions reach beyond a descriptive perspective and try to develop categories along which cultures can be compared to each other and positioned. To explain this, I will present two approaches to cultural dimensions that define cultural characteristics based on bipolar antipodes.

Cultural dimensions by Hofstede

With his cultural dimensions, Hofstede tries to make cultures more tangible and comparable. His findings derive from his studies, which he carried out in 66 countries with over 117,000 participants (see Hofstede 1980, 2005). He initially created four dimensions; after the second study he added a fifth one. The pairs of opposites are the following (*ibid.*): individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance vs. risk-taking, high vs. low power distance and long-term vs. short-term orientation. Criticism is passed on the empirical model of Hofstede because he exclusively interviewed IBM-employees and used their answers to generalise to all members of one culture. Furthermore, by today the study is comparably old and has, from the German point of view, the disadvantage that it only reflects data for West Germany (see Hofstede 1980: 54ff; Bolten, 2007: 102f). There is also the question whether cultures can be valued, and what kind of impulses should result from an established distance between two cultures in one or more dimensions.

Cultural dimensions by Trompenaars

The Dutch researcher, who in many studies pointed out the relationship between cultures and organisations, builds his cultural dimensions on the premise that people are confronted with three main challenges in their lives (Trompenaars, 2004: 29). First, to create personal relationships with other members of a society, secondly, the use of time and dealing with the process of aging and thirdly, the confrontation with the ones regarding nature. Trompenaars divided the first challenge into five pairs of opposites. Those five pair of opposites are as follows (*ibid.*): Universalism vs. Particularism, Communitarianism vs. Individualism, neutral vs. emotional, diffuse vs. specific and achieved status vs. ascribed status (*ibid.*). Although Trompenaars's data is more current compared to those of Hofstede, the general critique of cultural dimensions remains.

Cultural Standards

While the previous models and dimensions try to approach cultures on a macro-analytical level, Thomas (1991) explains them on a meso- and micro-analytical level. To investigate a culture, typical and repetitive behavioural patterns are analysed, summarised, and cultural standards developed. According to cultural standard models there is a high probability that actors within a certain culture will act in alignment with the cultural standard. The so-called "critical incidents" are of eminent importance for such approaches (Puck, 2009: 85). Critical incidents single out situations suspect to cause potential conflicts with people from other cultures. These "critical moments" are used through case reports and answered by a multiple-choice method. In the logic of cultural standards an assessment of "right" and "wrong" behaviour must be carried out. In my view such techniques lead to a strong simplification of cultures because exceptional circumstances and the range of variations within a culture are not collected, stereotypes can be passed on, and thinking takes place in national cultures, which is a very narrow definition of culture (Bolten, 2007: 104f). In addition, cultural standards are relatively resistant to cultural change and they need to be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect the "true" state of a culture.

Cultural interaction

More recent explanations of culture come from communication sciences that understand culture as a source and result of human interaction (see Adler, 2002; Bolten, 2007). Basically, at least two communication partners who enter into a relationship with each other have a common communication channel and share certain content needed for interaction. Such a situation creates a reciprocal process of negotiation in which the interaction partners alternately progress in the role of the transmitter, who generates messages, and the receiver, who receives the messages and responds to the counter partner (*ibid.).* The interaction partners do not communicate without a cultural background; they make use of their prior cultural experiences in the process. Bolten speaks in this context of "cultural styles" (*ibid*: 75), and a common "cultural memory" (Assmann and Hölscher, 1988: 9). Cultural memories form the pool of common rules, norms and values (*ibid*: 9ff). Cultural styles are the outward forms of cultural memories, so that the ratio must be understood like that of *conceptas* and *perceptas*. The more people share rituals, conventions and norms, the greater is the liability of cultural styles and the likelihood of recourse to common cultural experiences (see Bolten, 2007:

58f.). On the other hand, it may lead to misunderstandings when use is made of different cultural memories, and different cultural styles come together. Such an approach allows capturing cultures on a micro-, meso- and macro-analytical level. It is open to the individual case and is usable from the perspective of human resource development (see Bolten, 2007: 99ff.).

Professionalisation in adult education

To clarify the concept of professionalisation in adult education this term must be defined in contrast to profession and professionalism. Subsequently, all three terms are defined, links highlighted and a differentiated analysis of professionalisation in adult education will follow at the end.

Profession

Discussing the scientific term profession, which derives from the Latin word "professio" that is "public commitment", it is necessary to distinguish between two theoretical perspectives. Firstly, from a socio-professional research that has its origins in the 20s and 30s of the last century in the Anglo-American world. This discourse is located outside a discussion in adult education and temporally precedes it. Secondly, there is an intra-disciplinary debate on adult education as a profession.

Most sources view the origin of a modern profession research in the papers by Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933), which were published in the 1920s and '30s. Although their publications had an initial impetus for a discussion of professions, the first theoretical constructs of professions are rather related to the works of Marshall and Parsons (1939). In the following decades new approaches beside structural-functionalist approaches, including those of Marshal and Parsons, were formulated, which relate to different theoretical schools. In addition to the previously mentioned approach a variety of other constructs based on system theory (Stichweh, 1996) or symbolic-interactionism (Hughes, 1965) can be named. Key distinctive feature of all approaches is the scientific analysis position. While structural-functionalist and systemic approaches explore the historical emergence and development of professions and their position in society and to other professions, the research interest of symbolic-interactionist works is the analysis on a micro-level, i.e. the interaction between professionals and their clients. Beside this classification scheme power-theoretical approaches (Larson, 1977) view professions as an elite project of a social group to secure a certain

social status and power by the control and distribution of professional member-ship. Although macro-and micro-analytic approaches were selected and different trends and approaches have emerged in the profession research, we can deduce overlapping and connecting features throughout these definitions of profession. According to the different approaches of professions the following criteria can be agreed upon (see Goode, 1957; Nittel, 2000):

- Management of a body of knowledge;
- Responsibility for a socially relevant core problem;
- Control of access to a profession;
- Long-lasting academic training;
- Professional ethos, defined and controlled by an association;
- Relationship between professionals and clients.

Those characteristics are the first point of reference in a debate on profes-sions in (adult) education in Germany and other European countries during the '60s and '70s (see Nitte, 2000). While in the earlier stages an increased chance of adult education as a profession was expected, there seems to be no current repre-sentative within the discipline who fully describes adult education as a profession based on the criteria mentioned before (*ibid.*). The question of whether an estab-lishment of adult education as a full profession is desirable or not seems to have differing answers (*ibid.*). Profession represents a social-collective concept of order; however, it describes not the essence that is the core brand or the performance of a profession. Though micro-analytically oriented approaches look more closely to the level of performance, they do not differentiate between performances any further. The definition and differentiation of professional acts should be fulfilled by corresponding sciences. Instead of a term of order a term of quality is applied: professionalism.

Professionalism

While profession generates a classification within a social system and therefore strongly acts on a macro-analytical level, professionalism refers not to a position or a localisation in a system, but describes a particular form or quality of products and actions (see Combe and Helsper, 1996).

The first derivation of professionalism can be done via expressions such as "to be professional" or "the professional". While "to be professional" describes a way of how to run activities and services or how products are made, and thus describe the quality of an action, "the professional" refers to the personal level of and acting individual. Professionalism can therefore be considered at three

levels: actor, process and outcome (*ibid*.). All three areas are connected to each other and placed in a causal relationship. The actor must have skills and competences, which he uses in a process to achieve a desired result. In contrast to unprofessional behaviour, professional services plans and systematic approaches are applied in order to achieve results efficiently and with high quality. On those criteria a distinction between professional actors and non-professional actors such as amateurs or dilettantes, which are characterized more by intuition, improvisation rather than by planning and skills, is assumed. Accordingly, a higher level of performance is being expected from professionals than non-professional. Hence transferred to occupational contexts, a longer and more intensive training and practice are needed for specific knowledge and skills to emerge. Thus, the two key elements of professionalism on the cognitive (knowledge) and conative (practice) level are defined *(ibid*.). Professionalism is therefore not only the acquisition of knowledge, but its quality has to be proven in a specific professional performance anew.

This raises the question of who assesses professionalism. Professionalism must be understood as a relational concept, which is considered along the distinction "amateurish" and "professional". A general definition of professionalism can only be made at a very abstract level and must be further elaborated and clarified by each discipline (research), members of a profession (practice) as well as their customers and clients. For example doctors, engineers or adult educators follow different paradigms and therefore different professional criteria will be derived for each of these. Those criteria are used within a profession as high-quality standards for service delivery, which act as a guideline.

Looking closer at adult education, the question is raised of how professional behaviour is to be defined. Again it is a challenge to find a unique definition of what professionalism of actors in adult education is. For a number of reasons a consensus has not yet been found in research. One reason lies in the diversity of activities in adult education. Depending on the source, the following fields of activities in adult education can be named: management, planning and organisation, media, teaching and evaluation (see Faulstich and Zeuner, 2007). For each of these sections of adult educational practice a set of different assessment criteria for a professional or non-professional performance needs to be developed. In essence, all activities in adult education seek to positively influence the learning processes of adults at various stages. It still is the interaction between educators/trainers and learners, such as didactics and methodology, which defines the core of adult education (Nuissl, 1996: 33).

So far, in almost no country in Europe can one find mandatory rules of access to the field of adult education, and there are still no clear qualification profiles

(see Sava, 2011). The debate about professionalism within the adult education discipline reflects a rather new discussion in comparison to previous approaches towards professions. In terms of the growing orientation criteria, formulations of skills standards and competency profiles can be found in the development of the EQF and NQF (CEDEFOP, 2012). Compared to a European framework for language skills, such a reference system for adult educators is still in its infancy. Such a perspective implies a multi-dimensional view of "adult educational professionalism", which reflects the aspects of knowledge, competences, performance and field of action.

Professionalisation

Dealing with the concept of professionalism in adult education, two meanings of professionalisation must be distinguished (see Nittel, 2000). First, there is the development of the discipline of adult education with regards to its being a profession. Therefore the focus moves towards a collective professionalism, which is set in a social context and considered in comparison to other occupations and professions. Historical analysis and the fulfilment of classical criteria of professions are especially related to this perspective. Conversely, professionalism can be understood as personal development and promotion of individuals who are involved in adult education. This perspective is about developing skills that are relevant for the performance of activities and required in the field of adult education. Professionalisation can therefore be viewed as professionalisation of adult education and in adult education. In the context of this article, professionalisation is not being regarded as a collective process in terms of a move towards a profession of adult education, but as a continuous education and training process enhancing individual qualification and maturation of adult educators. Central here is a competency-based perspective, which sees professionalisation as a process to achieve professionalism. Professionalisation can firstly start from the individual, which can happen for various reasons, such as the motivation of self-development, or employability, or, understood from the perspective of organisations, as human resource development for the purpose of safeguarding and expanding abilities. Professionalisation impulses can therefore be of an individual or organisational origin. As the access to the field of adult education is not regulated by distinct routes of qualification, the following formal and non-formal professional paths can be conceptualised and need to be adapted to national settings:
- Academic studies;
- Vocational training;
- Self-education;

- Market-oriented training (training providers);
- Training in companies.

The list shows that skills development is marked by several paths of quali-
fication for activities in adult education that are characterised by different poles:
formal vs. non-formal, state vs. market, closed vs. open and individual vs. collec-
tive. Aligned to this scheme various formats for "intercultural professionalisation"
are conceivable and need further research.

Conclusion

Cultural diversity is, in work and life contexts, triggered by globalisation trends,
migration, and political intentions. The discussion of the concepts of culture and
of different approaches to cultural theory has shown that situations of cultural
overlap of people of different cultural socialisation can lead to uncertainty, disori-
entation and denial. The aim of intercultural adult education should be creating
the settings in which learning with and from each other, among culturally diverse
adults, can take place. The idea is to guide learning processes that promote and fa-
cilitate effective and conflict-free actions in culturally diverse groups. The design
of such learning environments in adult education requires trained personnel who
could have both the knowledge of theories of culture, interculturality and poten-
tial conflicts, and the ability to apply adequate methodology and didactics. The
diversity in the professionalisation of adult educators leads to an incomparability
that searches for common quality standards, the formulation of educational con-
tents and objectives and the development of professional formats. The article has
discussed both aspects of „culture" and „professionalism", and created first points
of reference. With a view to establishing „intercultural professionalisation" of
staff development in adult education, the following questions must be explored:
- What skills and competences must an intercultural trainer gain and
  how do they differ from „national" trainers?
- What kind of professionalisation formats do exist for adult educators?
- How are these formats designed and do they have similar standards?
- What should a common framework for intercultural educators be like?

The analysis and development of a „professionial diversity" in adult edu-
cation and the creation of common standards may on return lead to an increas-
ing acceptance of the discipline itself by clients and customers, and therefore
promote adult education as a profession. New fields need to be allocated for
adult education, to be explored intensively, and an exchange between research

and practice should be encouraged. In the end adult education will be evaluated and judged by the quality of learning formats and the professionalisation of its personnel. At this point adult education is still at an early stage of developing an „intercultural profile".

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Interkulturna profesionalizacija u obrazovanju odraslih

Apstrakt: Verovatnoća da ćemo živeti i raditi u različitim kulturnim kontekstima povećala se u poslednje dve decenije. Kako bi izbegli interkulturne konflikte i negovali efikasnu i mirnodopsku saradnju između ljudi koji su pripadnici različitih kultura, neophodno je pripremati i obučavati ljude. Postoji sve veća potreba za obukama u oblasti interkulturnosti pa je obrazovanje odraslih pravilo poređenje među državama, ali je sprovelo veoma mali broj istraživanja kada su u pitanju interkulturne teme. U ovom radu će biti reči o potrebama i perspektivama interkulturne profesionalizacije edukatora u oblasti obrazovanja odraslih. Kao konceptualni okvir prikazana je teorija kulture i rasprava o profesiji, profesionalizmu i profesionalizaciji u obrazovanju odraslih. U okviru zaključka biće predložene perspektive za budućnost istraživanja interkulturne profesionalizacije.

Ključne reči: kulturne teorije, interkulturno učenje, profesija, profesionalizam, profesionalizacija, kvalitet u obrazovanju odraslih.

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