

Towards public policy on adult and continuing education as a meeting point of society's demands and individual's needs

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Better policies for adult education

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The value of the publication

“Adult and continuing education in Europe. Pathways for a skill growth governance”

- Highly valuable for both policy makers and researchers**
 - theoretically sound**
 - empirically grounded**
 - policy sensitive**
 - concise with clear messages**

Main argument: Policy on adult education as a meeting point of society' demands and individual' needs

- **Concerns:** the individual is invisible in the three functions of public policy for ACE
 - A need to strongly acknowledge the individual as a demanding and decision-taking actor during all stages of ACE

- **Suggestion:**
 - A forth function of public policy for ACE: **to support personal growth and development**

- **Rationale:**
 - to go beyond utilitarian understanding of ACE (which emphasizes only the needs of society and economy)
 - to avoid authoritarian understanding of ACE (ACE as directed “from above” and used for social control)
 - to acknowledge its humanistic and emancipatory potential
 - to reflect the specificity of ACE, i.e. the fact that participation in it is voluntary, which makes the individual a real subject of its actions

Challenges at theoretical level

- **Further elaboration of the multidimensional and dynamic understanding of (non) participation in ACE**
 - ACE in life course and time perspectives: participation in continuing education is a hugely complex set of learning episodes and each actor's learning trajectory encompasses a unique combination of learning episodes
 - The quality of ACE does matter: participation and non-participation in what?
 - The variety of learners' aims and motives for (non)participation, both job and personally related

- **From “what is” to “why it is so”**
 - To go beyond facts and reveal the mechanisms which explain facts
 - For example: the process of social reproduction is well documented, i.e. the higher the parents' educational levels the higher are the educational achievements of their child. The question is why it is so?

Challenges at policy level (1)

How to bridge the gap between:

□ **Policy formulation and policy implementation**

From “must” to “how”: there are a lot of recommendations, the problem is how they could be realized as far as implementation and its results are always context sensitive

□ **Policy at European level and national policies**

Mechanisms of external effects on national education policies: borrowing (imitation, copying), learning, harmonization, standardization, interdependence, imposition

Challenges at policy level (2)

How to bridge the gap between:

□ **Holistic approaches and targeted intervention**

System reforms towards more comprehensive initial education and targeted intervention and measures for underrepresented and socially excluded groups

□ **Cross-sectoral policies and policies within the educational sphere**

The vicious circle: Educational (dis)advantages are cumulative as the participation in ACE is strongly dependent on the level of individual's education. A need for cross-sectoral policies, involving education, social work, youth, employment and social protection.

- **Lifelong Learning in Europe: Equity and Efficiency in the Balance.** Bristol: Policy Press, 2012.

- **Building a European Lifelong Learning Society: The Enduring Role of National Characteristics.** Edgar Elgar Publishing, 2013.

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Thanks for your attention!

